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A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
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KENNETH BURKE:

Excerpts from A Grammar of Motives

One could, if he wished, maintain that all theology, metaphysics, philosophy, criticism, poetry, drama, fiction, political exhortation, historical interpretation, and personal statements about the lovable and the hateful—one could if he wanted to be as drastically thorough as some of our positivists now seem to want to be—maintain that every bit of this is nonsense. Yet these words of nonsense would themselves be real words, involving real tactics, having real demonstrable relationships, and demonstrably affecting relationships. And as such, a study of their opportunities, necessities, and embarrassments would be central to the study of human motives.

* *

There are two primary generalizations that characterize the quality of motives: freedom and necessity. And whenever they appear, we know that we are in the presence of "god-terms," or names for the ultimates in motivation.

* *

Might we not rightfully say that a most significant feature of the Christian terminology, developed probably from Stoicism, is its way of so merging concepts of servitude and freedom, of obligation and privilege, of obedience and

rule, that the free man can be defined in terms of service, and the servant in terms of liberty?

* *

The Epicurean ideal was of a pleasant slumber one might enjoy at the same time he was *thoroughly aware* that he was sleeping. This would be in contrast with the Stoic ideal of a painless insomnia, moral vigilance, a constant watching and waiting which might nonetheless, with the help of rational doctrine, combine universal sympathy and individual apathy.

* *

When we were young, we used to ask one another whether, since we were living in a boring age, it would be possible to write works of art that were not themselves boring or that were not exclusively concerned with boring people in boring situations. Later we found that, whatever the bad character of our age might be, it was not boring. This interpretation of the scene had evidently been a function of our situation as adolescents. Indeed, we discovered that, if no better motive came along, merely the attempt to work one's way out of fear and anger was enough to stave off boredom.

* *

As an adolescent, when I first read Santayana, I dreamed of a tourist life in white flannels along the Mediterranean. He still means to me something like that, though more circumstantially accurate: reading in the country, on a mild afternoon, after a bit of gardening, or a slow walk in the woods, perhaps with the sound of friends playing tennis in the distance. (Should the garden not be economically necessary, then it is cultivated on principle.) . . . Reading him, we do feel that it might be enough to cultivate the contemplation of essences, simply through love of dwelling in the vicinity of terms at rest and at peace, terms that would serve as much as terms can to guide us through a long life of euthanasia.

* *

In coming to sexual maturity, and preparing psychologically to seek a mate, the male during the period of courtship turns from the maternal woman (the principle of utility) to the erotic woman (the principle of purpose, in the form of the *desired*). Insofar as the feminine principle retains maternal aspects, courtship involves symbolic incest; hence, the principle of erotic purpose must "transcend" the principle of maternal utility. A dissociation in the attitude towards woman becomes necessary.

* *

In pure poetry, perhaps the most magnificent instance of a merging of the maternal and erotic principles . . . is in Baudelaire's sonnet *La Géante*. Here the disproportion in size between mother and child is idealized as a relation between queen and cat, giantess and poet, mountain and hamlet. The conceit is "evil" because the ratio is maintained in amatory imagery suggesting the attitude of a lover toward his mistress.

* *

Even at times when religious symbolism flourished, the basic processes of human

psychology were often stated in monetary terms. But in proportion as the monetary terms have become the central vocabulary of motives, not figurative but public "reality" itself, we may have to read the earlier religious monetary metaphors in a different spirit, using them rather as passages that indicate to us the possible "overtones" of money which the rationale of accountancy itself must leave out of account.

* *

When we have gone from "God's law" to "natural law" and thence to the "market law" that had become a "second nature" with those raised in a fully developed capitalist ethic, we find many pious apologists of the *status quo* who would deduce human freedom itself from the free market, as the only scene from which a free social act could be drawn. They thus attribute to the mechanics of price the position in the genealogy of action once held by no less distinguished a Personage than God himself, formerly defined as the ground of all possibility.

* *

If you have an unpleasant piece of work to be done, and don't want to do it yourself, in a slave culture you may get this done by force, compulsion, threat. Or in a pious culture you may get it done "religiously," if those who are asked to do the work are moved by such motives as devotion, admiration, sense of duty. But in a capitalist labor market, all that is necessary is for you to say, "Who'll do this for five dollars?"—and men press forward "independently," of their "own free will," under orders from no one, to "voluntarily" enlist for the work.

* *

Though work might "in itself" be drudgery, in time this shortcoming was rectified by the growth of the "amusement industry" to the point where it formed one of the biggest investments in our entire culture. And by going where one chose to be amused, one could enjoy for almost nothing such a wealth of performers, avid to entertain, as was never available to the most jaded of Oriental potentates, however vast his revenues.

* *

Under normal peace-time conditions, the worker possessed a dual role. As a wage-earner he was feared; at times of strikes he was quite systematically slandered; and the attempt was always made to keep his salary at a minimum. Yet this same man was also a customer. And as a customer, or wage-spender, he was subjected to an incessant campaign of cajolery and flattery. He was given, for a few cents a copy, papers or periodicals that cost as much as thirty or forty cents a copy, all for the purpose of wheedling his attention, or his inattention, in behalf of sellers.

* *

Sinister interests may have so strong a hold upon the channels of authority that people will try their utmost to do what is asked of them, even to the point of destitution, perplexity, and suicide. Yet, even though the people would obey, there is materialistic solace in the thought that the sheer brute materials of the

world as it is will disobey. For there are properties of the material order that are grounded in a more basic constitution than any that men can write.

* *

Few ironies are richer in complexities than the irony of men's servitude to his mechanical servants. For though it is nothing less than an act of genius to *invent* a machine, it is the nagging drudgery of mere motion to *feed* one.

* *

The spread of secularization and rationalistic individualism is "normally" a sure sign of cultural disintegration. But the combination of technological and monetary rationalism transformed these "signs of decay" into trends wholly "progressive."

* *

This symbiosis of money and technology has made a "double genesis" possible in the imputing of motives, as the thinker may attribute to "capitalism" the aspects of our civilization he dislikes and to "technology" the aspects in which he places his hopes, or vice versa.

* *

When Heraclitus offered "Strife" and "War" as synonyms for his Universal Fire (proclaiming it the causal ancestor and magistrate, "father and king," of all things), was he not but saying, in a forceful way, that history is "dialectical," developing by the give and take of combat?

* *

The ambiguity of external and internal motivation has recently plagued some enemies of Fascism who saw that an effective war against the Fascist nations would require many "Fascist" measures on the part of the Anti-Fascists. As the Irish poet, George Russell, once stated the form of their predicament: "We become the image of the thing we hate." And the great dialectician, Coleridge, has observed that *rivales* are the opposite banks of the *same* stream. And it was dialectically, or dramatically, necessary that the *devil* should be an *angel;* for were he of any less noble substance, the Christian *agonia* would to that degree have fallen short of thoroughness in imagining a common ground on which the two conflicting motives, good and evil, can join battle.

* *

The Japanese were told they were not to think of the Japanese forces as passively suffering attack, but as actively drawing the enemy closer, so that the eventual counterblow might be more effective. On reading this, one immediately saw the grammatical principle at the basis of the Germans' propaganda under conditions of defeat. When they were being pursued across North Africa from the east, for instance, it was explained that their armies were rapidly "advancing westward." And their retreats in Russia were described as the use of "space as a weapon."

* *

When the restricting of investment proceeds without a corresponding change in man's concept of motives, you must get the aggressive futurism of National-Socialist expansion and (or) the balked futurism of would-be enterprisers who,

deprived of an outlet for their ambitions, and with no other conception of effort to replace these, turn in their disgruntlement to a hatred of Jews, foreigners, Negroes, "isms," etc.

* *

There is a real sense in which brute force is less thoroughly militant than poetry or philosophy, since its expression is so crude and superficial, and can only be said to go to the depths of a man because there is a stupid modern habit of thinking that a few easily aroused forms of fury and vengeance constitute the "depths" of mankind. One might with more justice complain that we today are suffering from a woeful inferiority in the quality of the "enemy." "Evil" has become reduced to brute masses of explosive, with a few rudimentary processes of misrepresentation (got by organized control of the news).

* *

A president who would strive to unify a democratic nation must not unify it too well. That is, if the material situation itself contains vast conflicts of interests, he must keep all the corresponding voices vocal. Yet at the same time he must seek to find some over-all motive, or situation, as would be got in the slogan featuring a common goal or a common enemy.

* *

It is the normal prayerful use of language to sharpen up the blunt and to blunt the too sharply pointed. Hence when Roosevelt, some years ago, came forth with a mighty blast about the death sentence he was delivering to the holding companies, I took this as evidence on its face that the holding companies were to fare quite favorably. Otherwise, why the blast? For if something so integral to American business was really to be resolved, I am sure that the President would have done all in his power to soften the blow, since he would naturally not go forth courting more trouble than he would be in for already.

* *

When the Roosevelt administration began, the country was quite prepared for socialization of the banking structure. Even a large proportion of the bankers themselves were willing; for their banks were insolvent, and one thing that our capitalists are always willing to socialize is a loss.

* *

When . . . we recall that magical prophecy aimed to bring about events by solemnly proclaiming that they would come to pass, we might also recall the great "concern" which Roosevelt's opponents at the last election constantly showed about his health. I do not mean that there is a single one of them who would have killed him. I mean simply that his sacrifice was demanded, as the logical conclusion of their own position. . . . And when it came, they were perhaps more deeply shocked than was the case with many of his devoted followers, for whom his spirit would still live on, since for them his death was likewise a resurrection.

* *

We may note how legislatures regularly adopt the "Hamletic" strategy as a way to avoid embarrassing decisions. For if you would forestall final vote on a

measure, and would do so in the best "scientific" spirit, you need but appoint a committee empowered to find more facts on the subject. This same Hamletic device (Hamlet being the first great liberal) comes pleasantly to the aid of savants who would busy themselves in behalf of social betterment without hurting susceptibilities. In keeping with the nature of their specialties, they can gather more data and still more, to aid us in the making of wise decisions. And when the matter has been documented beyond a doubt, they may go on and document it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Assuredly, there will be something for them to do as long as the subsidies last; for no decision in the world's history was ever made on the basis of all the "necessary facts," nor ever will be.

* *

One must remember that a scapegoat cannot be "curative" except insofar as it represents the iniquities of those who would be cured by attacking it. In representing *their* iniquities, it performs the role of vicarious atonement (that is, unification, or merger, granted to those who have alienated their iniquities upon it, and so may be purified through its suffering).

* *

When the attacker chooses for himself the object of attack, it is usually his blood brother. The debunker is much closer to the debunked than others are. Ahab was pursued by the white whale he was pursuing. And Aristotle says that the physician should be a bit sickly himself, to better understand the symptoms of his patients.

* *

Crime produces a kind of "oneness with the universe" in leading to a sense of universal persecution whereby all that happens has direct reference to the criminal. There is no "impersonality" in the environment; everything is charged with possibilities. And though this is in one sense a painful condition, it is obviously so full that one can understand why men become habitual criminals, once they have come to conceive of living in these terms. Much of the world that would be otherwise neutral is charged with personal reference, thereby having much the quality that Aristotle asks of a dramatic plot. . . . And for the criminal, the whole world is thus purposive, so that the experience of criminal guilt in a sense restores the teleological view lost by evolutionism.

* *

All told, in the project directed "towards the purification of war," the Grammar should assist to this end through encouraging tolerance by speculation. For it deals with a level of motivation which even wholly rival doctrines of motives must share in common; hence it is addressed to a speculative portion of the mind which men of many different situations may have in common.

GILBERT NEIMAN:

Lazarus Laughs

Nightmarish, that government life. After a few months of it, you felt like a robot whom everybody expected to turn out to be the Wizard of Oz. You were infested with insects and vermin of every description, lice, cockroaches, bedbugs—ah, how many bugs bedded in you, how many rodents battened on you!

At the top were the sugar magnates, pulling tufts of ticker-tape out of your cranium. They had such ballooning bellies they had no trouble at all in floating in mid-air, hovering about your head, their fat faces wreathed in notoriously eternal cherubic smiles while they flailed with their paws at the dome of your skull, snatching out fistfuls of ticker-tape, which they pulled like taffy. Down a bit below, perched on the shoulders of this fantastic body of yours, were the sugar company foremen, overseers, and their stooge mayordomos of the fields; these guys ran about like mad, stomping on every muscle they could tread on, fuming with rage, waving their arms about, rushing up to your ear and swinging on the lobe of it, trying to tear it off, endeavoring to scramble inside, to get at the eardrum. Boy! how they'd like to get their hammers and tongs working on that! As if this weren't enough to stand up under in good Spartan style, grinning and agreeing with everyone at that stale, omnipresent joke (always seeming original and spontaneous to the jokester) about what a snap a government job was—at your heart, which was wooden of course, a particular, favorite Mexican of yours was always drilling away steadily with brace and bit, some of the sawdust he made flying up and getting in your eyes every now and then, which was quite embarrassing, since the water it caused there looked suspiciously like tears.

That's the anatomy as far as the heart. Understand, we're working from the higher regions down. Now we can go really down. We can take a plunge from the heart, where that favorite Mexican is always boring away with might and main, down, down, down, to the calves of your legs, and even further, to the ankles, that's the spot, the ankles and the feet, the crackling of bones, the crushing of flesh under the soles of your feet, and the hundreds, literally thousands of Mexican arms and legs that were struggling for a foothold, a crevice, a hair strong enough to hang onto, as your robot legs marched on.

That's the picture of your body. No exaggeration! Any God who looked down saw it that way. And you, by God, saw it that way. Christ! that pan of yours in the mirror was just a ghost. It opened its mouth, but it was this other robot thing that made the sounds that came out. And what sounds they were! Hoots, whistles, screams, yells; cajoling, whining, flattering, threatening; always like a boiler-works at some stage of the day. But one thing sure about this government job: you couldn't be human any more. No time for it. The only

thing human about you were the lives clinging onto your clay feet, trying to hold on for dear life, some slipping and getting crunched under. Every time you stooped over to pick a life up, by the time you arose to a standing position again, there were twice as many of those balloon-bellied sugar gnats diving at your skull, and twice as many of those grasshoppers lighting on your shoulders. I'd stooped over a few times, and learned my lesson. You had to stand upright and keep batting those damned nuisances off with your hands, or they'd have you devoured to the collar bone in no time at all.

Agricultural Labor Relations Specialist, that was the moniker I went under. You see how similar that sounds to the Wizard of Oz! If I could have had some less magical-sounding title, like Relations Robot, for example, or Agricultural Adder, so much might not have been expected of me—from all sides. My job, as first outlined, seemed simple. There was that international contract signed by the governments of the United States and Mexico; each worker had one in his pocket in English and Spanish, and all we were supposed to do was enforce it. It read simply enough: they should be kept employed 75 percent of the time after they got off the train from Mexico until they got on again; and they should get the same wages people around them were getting for doing the same kind of work. What more specific, more lucid than that? But ah, poor devils, I thought, looking about the train at them (I am recalling a specific trainride I made *after* I had learned the ropes), they did not know what was in store for them, how many loopholes, detours, and sidetracks were awaiting them, after they were delivered over into the wily hands of the sugar companies. How many ways of estimating that 75 percent: 75 percent of a day? 75 percent of a week? a month? of their stay with just one farmer? They would be shuttled back and forth between farmers in waltz, fox-trot, rumba, and tarantella time; in three-quarter time, on the off-beat, on the down-beat, with crescendo and diminuendo. The farmer would keep one time, the sugar company another, the worker a third time; groups would be split and played off against each other in varying time, brother would be alienated from brother, father sundered from son, neighbor pitted against neighbor. And the wages? Why, that would prove as simple as a mud-pie to be split four and twenty ways with thirteen and sixteen blackbirds hopping out.

I could choose any part of the country, California, Arizona, etc., but my mind is on a particular trainload of eight hundred hurtling along through the night from Denver, Colorado, to Billings, Montana.

Great send-off we'd had in Denver that afternoon. Tremendous ovation, all the Pan-American clubs, Sociedades Honorificas, Women's Aid Societies, South American Book Review clubs, and Latin America discussion groups had banded together to scare up a couple of frightened girls with moth-eaten mantillas and patchwork-quilt Spanish dresses, to repeat two dances over and over again, to the strumming of three correspondence school guitarists and the pounding of a tyro on a broken-down marimba. This was the greeting, prepared as the culmination of a frenzied year of dinner parties and speech-making on the new responsibilities of North Americans to their good neighbors

to the South. In had chugged the train, windows jammed with these *braceros* from the heart of Michoacán and Guanajuato, champing at the bit to attack the fields, "para ayudar el esfuerzo de la guerra," waving their arms out of windows with fingers in a V, to show their patriotism and solidarity. All those clubs thronged the station platform and set their protegées off with hasty pleas to go through their frightened paces. Plunk, plunk, went the guitars; clink, clank, rattled the marimba's weary bones, and the girls did something like an 1890 adagio in slow motion, bitterly chewing on the twine of their castanets, which seemed always perilously near to slipping off their fingers. This tugging at castanet strings with the teeth lent a certain charm as well as anticipatory interest to their dancing.

The campesinos swarmed out of the train, genuinely touched by this festive dancing. They clustered around the girls. "Ay, chatita de mi alma, qué divina bailas!" The girls turned a modest magenta, more scared than ever at all these *piropos,* and their joints became as disconnected as those of toy skeletons jerking on strings. Newsmen were thick as flies; popped flashbulbs, asked for acrobatic poses with sombreros, grins, leers, and more V's with the fingers. And were those *braceros* obliging? Why, they'd have stood on their heads, if a cameraman had thought of it. The evening papers would carry big spreads about the tremendous reception the citizens of Denver had put on to welcome these agricultural warriors from "South of the Río Grande," who were preparing to go out and wage war on the fields, ripping up sugar beets with the vengeance our soldiers were using on the Japs. And in a glow of civic pride the whole city could retire that night to sleep the sleep of the blessed, dreaming sugar-capped, cake-icinged dreams, snoring on the sweet cushion of charity.

But there had been an added treat. The government was not going to leave it up to these discussion groups to come across with something tangible. We didn't want to be disillusioned, so we'd bought eight hundred boxes of ice cream to go with the box lunches. Now that had really been appreciated, lapped up. There were only about six of us to carry the boxes, so we hadn't done so well with the distribution. Some cars had copped two of the eight big boxes, so others went without. But in those cars with the boxes it was merry as a circus. Contest groups sprang up everywhere, the game being to see who could eat the most boxes of ice cream first. Some fellows polished off two boxes in less than three minutes. Hardier ones downed five, and walked around like refrigerators on stilts, an Arctic aurora borealis on their brows. And we'd seen to it that the restaurant proprietor put that cake we'd paid for in the box lunches, too. We'd had time to open a few, and they hadn't been able to skimp on us this time.

Now it was about one o'clock in the morning as we hurtled towards Canada. I was in the thick of one of the cars, watching their steamy bodies sprawl and slide over one another, a toe in this fellow's eye, an elbow in that one's mouth, as they tried to curve aching bones into a free space. They had found a way of taking the backs off a pair of seats and fashioning a kind of couch, large enough for two, which five and six would occupy. Some lay on the floor under the couch, some in the aisles; so many dead bodies, looking as though they had

been tossed in to be carted off to a communal pyre. Five days and going into the sixth night of constant riding in chair cars. Box lunches all the time. By now the lot of them was so constipated the toilets could have been kept clean—*if* they'd been cleaned up—*if* the benevolent railroad companies had not told their porters to let the Mexicans fend for themselves. And these fellows paid for by the government at full price, too. But so peaceful they looked, stretched out in these dead attitudes; in the arms of God now, able to belch ice cream bubbles; in the arms of the sugar barons tomorrow, lucky if they could belch anything. How blissful, sprawled out like that, having the happy dream of arriving at their destination, the hard journey over. After that, all they'd have to do would be jump off the trains and set to work. That's what they thought. They could have their dreams, the longer they lasted the better. I was sitting there waiting for trouble. It always comes at the end of the trip, when you unload, or are close to it. It came, this time in the form of a telegram, which a government escort who rides the train from Mexico City brought to me, waving it wildly, walking down the aisle like a tightrope walker on tiptoe, trying not to gouge an eye out with a toe or flatten a nose with a heel.

The telegram was from Billings. It read: "Have no work sugar beets for two perhaps three weeks stop can get work railroad all right question. Signed J. B. Cass Manager Great Northern Sugar."

It was addressed to the escort. "Why the hell's it to me?" he said. "You're handling this shipment." "I'll tell you why," I said. "You let their public relations eagle buy you two shots and a stogie in Denver and tell you how glad they are to have these workers and how much they love Mexicans. Line's always the same. 'Most efficient race for sugar beet work in the world. Like to see these chaps in guaraches and sombreros with the light, flopping pants. They're the type we want. None of your city slickers in 'em.' Hell, yes, they want 'em this way. 'Unspoiled.' Great Northern won't spoil them, either. They'd murder them first. Here they've been howling for a month in every newspaper in five states about the worker shortage; government not doing anything; going to plow up the beets. What happens: workers arrive; according to newspapers weeks late; but the beets aren't up yet. They know the time those beets come up to the day. He knows damn well railroad companies have a separate contract with Mexico. But both companies want to bring them in without contracts, dump 'em, work it like they did in the last World War. Then they'll have a crop of starving guys on their hands they can treat as they wish. Work 'em three days, kick 'em off thirty; always plenty of workers handy in the nearest jungle."

"What are you going to do about the telegram?"

"He knows the answer. Cass can stick it where it rhymes."

I could talk nice and tough like that about it, but I was all shot up inside over it—shot out, rather, that was why I felt empty as a robot. It was the same battle all over the United States, wherever you went, the same old story, what the corporations, the processors, did. Get 'em on the fields too early, grab more than you need, work 'em all like mad for a couple of weeks, then lay 'em off

too soon, and gummy up the 75 percent. The sugar companies, the vegetable packing houses, the citrus crops, all work the same racket with a thousand variants of alibis. Then our accountants and their accountants get together on the 75 percent about the time don Fulano *bracero* goes home; and let me tell you two accountants together are just like two lawyers in a private tete-a-tete over whiskey and crumpets: what comes of it no one ever finds out, least of all God.

First stop. Unload a hundred. Two o'clock in the morning. One lone station agent. "Where's the government guy?" "Him and the sugar company man left two hours ago." "Didn't they know the train schedule?" "Hell, yes. They was sleepy." This guy of ours has been informed the Great Northern is to have trucks there to take them to beds. I get him at his home on the 'phone. "Where do you expect these workers to sleep?" "In the station, of course. It's warm." "On the floor?" "There're benches, ain't they?" "Hard wood. Nice soft tile. You come down here." "Hell, no. I got work to do tomorrow." "You're not coming?" "No." "Listen, you lazy sonofabitch. You working for the government or the sugar company?" "Hey, nobody can call me a sonofabitch and get away with it. I'm going to come down there and push your face in." "You come ahead. And bring that sugar company guy with you. I want to take a poke at him, too." Bang, goes the receiver. He's on his way.

I go out of the booth. The hundred campesinos are neatly, respectfully lined up in the lobby of their own accord, sombreros in hand, a beautiful bunch of guys come to the new country, ready to work their heads off for their great ally to the North, make a little money, and help out with the war, since they can't enlist in our army, as many of them ask. It's enough to make you cry, those expectant faces.

"Oigan, compañeros," I start out, and go on with a pretty little speech about how much we appreciate their coming here to harvest our crops. "But there's been a slight hitch. The local government man didn't get his instructions, hence we're having a bit of trouble about the beds. When this caballero comes, he has bad stomach trouble, I'm told. He's getting off a sick bed to meet you. So, por favor, excuse him if he acts a bit crazy. Adiós. Que tengan mucho trabajo y ganen muchas águilas."

They're outside the station waving at me as I swing on the train. "Hasta luego, señor. Muchísimas gracias. Mil gracias. Por todo. Buen viaje." They're shouting at me, each one saying it in a different key, all of them thanking me from the bottom of their hearts. And sincerely, too. What beautiful guys, what gratefulness on their faces, what eagerness to learn. They'll learn, all right. Slowly, but surely. Maybe not tonight. Not tomorrow or the next day, but one, two weeks, that's about all the time it takes. Adiocito, lovely campesinos like children! You'll be worldly wise all too soon. Just let that sugar foreman and his government stooge work you over for a couple of weeks, and you'll find out about the practice of those fine democratic ideals in Henry Wallace's speech you all have tucked away in your sacks.

Daybreak. Everyone rolling over on one another; unscrambling of legs and

arms; creaking, cracking, and grinding of bones. "Ay, paisano, qué vida!" "Bonita la muerte!" "Ay, mamacita de mis recuerdos, dónde te has puesto?" "Muéstrame tus sabrosas nalgas, vírgen negra de mis sueños." And so on, all over the car. They wake up with hallelujahs, these paisanos. Not grumpy, grouchy, complaining, but with shouts of the joy of suffering! Ay, qué gente! In rags most of them, few with socks, many with guaraches. But such a happiness inside them! It glows through their eyes and even through the color of their skin! You can't stamp it out! Even a box-car couldn't dampen it!

We pull up. One of the escorts telegraphed for box lunches 24 hours ago. I ask the station agent, "Are they here?" "No, they're not here." "Get the order?" "Sure, just couldn't fill it." A goddamned lie. I detect a fine saboteuring sugary smell in this. I telephone Denver, We've got a good government chief there. One of the few, and one of the really good. A liberal in the back room as well as the front room. He's hopping mad. I ask him to can that guy in Nebraska. "Why should he be getting dough from Great Northern and us at the same time?" I ask. But seven hundred hungry mouths, and not a box to drop in them. The chief has a brainstorm. "Any other trains around?" "Two have just pulled in." "Any diners on 'em?" The station agent says one on each. "Sit tight," says the chief. "I'll call you back in a jiffy."

I'm stunned. Incredible. He can't do it. *Diners for Mexicans?* Why, it'll ruin the morale of these middle-western states for a coon's age. Hell, even on a Pullman, it's hard for a Mexican to get in a diner. The land of the free. But a Mexican isn't one of the free, there's the rub. I'll take my hat off to the government this time. That's the way it *could* be all over the country—if there were only more in the government like this guy, but there's only one of him. High up, that is. The chief turns the trick. The diners are switched. The station master is mad as a wet hen about it. Probably owns stock in Great Northern Sugar. They sidetrack the box lunches, so we take the diners. I'm jumping around like Nijinski.

Then it's my privilege, as we pull off, to see the first trainload of Mexican workers ever fed on a diner in the history of the United States. We've got to line them up and count the ones who come in, checking off their names, otherwise some of the sly ones will be eating twice. And as we're sailing over prairies, in comes the first batch, to sit down at the white tablecloths, shining silver decanters, and sparkling silverware. Negro waiters, steward in uniform. The waiters are scared, frankly. They've had so much propaganda drilled into them in formative years, they think the Mexicans will probably start a riot.

But what happens is this: the men come in, hats in hand, with the hushed awe of entering a cathedral. They sit down as though at mass. They don't know what to do with their sombreros; awkwardly place the high crowns on their laps, on the floor, under chairs. They're all brushed up, water shining on their hair. They look at each other in strange embarrassment, not knowing what to do next, afraid to open their mouths. It's all magic; you might think they were about to be electrocuted. Some don't know what to do with their napkins. One puts his in his pocket, mistaking it for a handkerchief. Some use them as bibs, others just hold them folded up, helplessly. But they're happy

inside: two or three titter; giggles are suppressed by hands over mouths. Oatmeal, prunes, then bacon, eggs, toast, coffee. They do O. K. with the prunes and oatmeal. But the perils of a knife and fork. One youth studies his fork and tries to use it as a knife; another solves the problem by making an egg sandwich with his hands; many stare covertly at the more sophisticated ones who wield knife and fork dextrously, and try to imitate them. They finish like rabbits, bolting everything without a sound, and slink out, some blushing, some painfully keeping a stiff face, others solemn as though they're witnessing a wake. The whole batch is out in ten minutes. The steward rubs his eyes. "Ain't never had a Mexican in this diner before. Why, they got more manners than any Americans I ever saw." The negro waiters are grinning at each other, scratching their heads, not scared any more. One of them comes up to the steward. "Say, boss. They good people."

It was this way at all the meals, breakfast, lunch, dinner. We caught four or five trying to eat the same meal twice, but that's not many out of seven hundred. I'd have liked them all to eat twice. They'd need the food later.

As we approach Billings, I'm day-dreaming; night-dreaming, rather, since it's around eleven o'clock.

Already I'm seeing into the future. Over there is a group of four brothers, sarapes about their shoulders, hard workers, whose lot it will be to sit for weeks in a house with no windows in freezing weather, nothing but their thin *pyamas* and sarapes on, no farmer appearing, the flue of the stove choked so they can only light it for meals, all the smoke coming inside the house, looking out at little sugar beet sprouts half an inch out of the earth, knowing they'll never work until they're over a hand's height. Not a cent to send back to anxious wives. There's a boy over there who doesn't know it, but in a couple of months he'll be coming down a highway to his shack with an armful of groceries, and a truck of Texas Mexicans will offer him a lift. He'll put his groceries on the back of the truck, and when his arm is around the two upright beet-hooks, sharp as gaffs, they'll haul off fast and drag him dangling by the forearm for two hundred yards until he drops off, hoping to kill him, looking back, taunting him, laughing insanely. I will take him to the doctor and have his left inner forearm sewn from wrist to elbow. That wizened Arab over there doesn't know it, but his farmer's going to refuse to advance him money for shoes, and within six weeks he's going to die of pneumonia from working in guaraches in the mud. There's a bright lad of twenty who will get an impacted tooth, and his cheek will swell up to the size of a cantaloupe, and he'll be a day off from death, when I find him lying in his bunk for a week, after the company foreman has advised the farmer not to bring him to me or tell me about it. "This free medicine's too good for 'em. The government's going to coddle these greasers until we'll have a bunch of sissies on our hands." That's what the foreman will tell the farmer, who being a big stock-holder in Great Northern will agree. And so it goes, so it goes. I can't know these things yet, but I can feel them in my bones, because I've seen it all happen before, and it is the same in all parts of the country: the treatment is basic, you might say.

But there's great hilarity now. Through all the long afternoon one big dark

buck, handsome as an Arabian prince, six feet four in stocking feet, but without stockings of course, has been pulling one joke after another. Shiny thick moustaches and the teeth of a prize colt. Laughing all the time. His name's something else, but because he's always laughing they've nicknamed him Lázaro, Lazarus. He's always merry, always joking, keeping their spirits pepped up, always bubbling with the sheer joy of being alive. And helpful; he's given things away; nursed a couple of fellows back to health; and so on, all the trip up. An analfabeto, illiterate, of course. Probably only marks an X for his name; but he's got all the learning of all the books in him from birth.

I wonder what kind of deviltry will be pulled off in Billings. They've been informed a month ahead, and recently, by twenty-four hours' notice, to have beds ready for the *braceros;* that's part of the contract they've signed, food and lodging on arrival. But, sure enough, it happens all over again. We arrive around midnight.

I find Cass and a gloomy bunch of stiff-arm aides glowering on the freight platform. I've promised every car that they're going to stretch out on a bed with sheets and get a good night's sleep.

Cass is a potentate, six feet three, sixty, about three hundred and fifty pounds of bully beef, famous in these parts for how to trample on Mexicans and "make 'em like it." He's been boss here for thirty years, and always has a gang around to admire his technique. I introduce myself, and he grunts, doesn't even shake hands. We don't mention the telegram about railroad work. He knows that's out anyhow. The boys get out, packs in hand. He looks them over. "They'll do, I guess," he says. He knows damn well they'll do; these are obviously peons who have never seen the States before, babes in the woods, just his meat; he'll get the last ounce of sweat out of them. Only trouble is, he doesn't have any work right now, all he can do is send them out to the fields to sit; the 75 percent has him worried as blazes.

"Where're the beds?" I say.

"The *what*?" he bellows in astonishment. Turning to his cohorts, "What new federal mollycoddling is this? Nothing in the contract, except the 75 percent, and that's all they'll get, and they won't get that until they get home."

I pull out the contract, and show him "lodging on arrival to be furnished by employer."

"Never heard of this before. We've got the railroad's permission to leave the cars on the track until morning, and there's where they'll sleep."

I've read a Billings paper down the line. It has a fine write-up about the 2,000 Mexican workers arriving belatedly to "save the crops." Great Northern expects a bumper season, and so on. Millions to accrue to the state of Montana with these foreign workers assuring a labor sufficiency, blah, blah, blah.

"Do you want these workers, or don't you? I've an escort beside me for a witness."

"Listen here," he shouts. "I've handled Mexicans all my life and I know how they think. We get along fine. I know what they like. Give 'em a bed and nine times out of ten they'll sleep on the floor. They don't know what to do in a bed."

I don't tell him I've heard that line in California, Arizona, and all points west, east, south, and north before.

"Want the workers, or don't you?"

"Hell, no. Ship 'em back, if it's on them terms."

"O.K.," I say briskly. It's now or never. I know we can't ship them back. I go into the station. They trail after me, wonderingly. I pick up the receiver of the 'phone by the ticket agent, and ask for Denver. "Can't use that," the ticket agent says. "What am I doing right now?" I say. Cass's right-hand gangster sidles up to me. "Say, buddy. Let's all of us go across the street and have a drink first. You take things too fast. We don't want to make no enemy outa you. It's just that we worked with Mexes all our lives. We know what they like." I ignore him, and call to Cass, who is mumbling to his henchmen. "Beds or no beds? Last chance." He just glowers. I start talking through the mouthpiece, although no connections have been made as yet. Suddenly I hear a bellow behind me, "All right. Put up that damn 'phone. I'll give 'em beds." "Food, too?" I say back. "Yeah, any damn thing. Caviar, if they want it." I click the receiver just as central is drowsily beginning to say, "Number, please."

So we march the seven hundred over to five hotels, and into the cafés below them first. The men line up double file of their own accord and make a fine parade out of it. Beds with sheets and a fifty-cent meal for all. The *braceros* can't believe it. "Que eso sí es la democracia, ya ves," they're beaming to one another. "Como dice en el discurso," they say, referring to the pamphlets they were handed at the border. Ah, yes, democracy, just like it says in Wallace's speech. They're raving about it. They think they're in the land of miracles. It's a happy, happy night.

The next morning comes the apportioning of workers to farmers. Cass has always carried this off with great pomp and circumstance, every year, his table set in the middle of the Union Station. He's the high lord and master, the grand potentate, parceling out his slaves to "save the crops." I've been told about this great affair the night before, what a spectacle he makes of it. So the 700 men are lined up around the station, and the farmers come up to his table and take three, seven, twenty, or how many they're down on his list for. Cass, with the regal munificence of a Simon Legree, counts the workers off like cattle. I watch the whole show from the sidelines. I've got an ace up my sleeve. All the countryside comes in to watch this slave market; it's one of the big events of the year; just like a county fair. Mexican townspeople look on at the pageant in awe. Cass is King. His very stature, towering and beefy, makes them tremble with fear. It's a great act of his, to draw himself up to full height as he sends a group of workers off, looking down on them from his celestial altitude. They shrivel up like mice. I pick a quiet moment when he's standing up like this, his head in the clouds, bellowing out to a farmer, "Make 'em work like hell, Tom. Got to keep after 'em."

I've got Lázaro in tow. I've told him I want to present him to a great American. He's very excited and honored over it.

"Mr. Cass," I say loudly, like a master of ceremonies. You could hear a pin drop in the station. He sits down, stunned. No one has ever addressed him in

such a loud tone of voice before. "Just as a symbol of the gratitude you have in your heart for the aid our neighbors to the South are lending us in our war effort, I want you to shake hands with one of Mexico's finest products, and express our thanks as fellow Americans to him for coming to our nation's rescue."

Then I pull Lázaro around to his side, and there's no help for it, nothing he can do. It would be unpatriotic in the eyes of the listening populace if Cass didn't stand up. With murder in his eyes for me, he pulls himself up to his awesome six three, but is bowled over to find he doesn't rise high enough, that Lázaro tops him. Somehow that lean, athletic, pearly-toothed Aztec prince makes Cass look like an empty wind-bag. Lázaro's hand is out, and with great reluctance he takes it. Probably the first time in his life he ever took a Mexican's hand. Cass senses all eyes are upon him, and has to save face. All the local Mexicans have crowded to the fore, and are looking on, mouths agape. He blusters, then tries to make a joke of it. He knows a few words of Spanish, and thinks this is the time to show the local Mexicans who's still boss. He looks scornfully at Lázaro's torn blue jeans.

"Qué pantalones magníficos. A cuánto me venden?"

Lázaro looks at his pants and says he will sell them for two cents. Then Cass asks him in Spanish about the twine Lázaro uses in lieu of a belt.

"And what a magnificent belt. What's your price for that?"

"If it fits you, for one centavo."

The Mexicans crowd closer. Cass looks at his frayed sombrero.

"I want to buy the hat, too. How much does that cost?"

"I'll throw that in free."

Then Cass wants to rock the natives; polish him off once and for all.

"And those fine moustaches. What's your price on them?"

Now Lázaro, catching on to the game, throws his head back, laughing as only a pure-souled person can. His laughter rings like a silver waterfall.

"O no, señor. Everything else you can have. But the moustaches I can't sell. They're Robert Taylor's."

Through the whole Union Station a roar went up that boomed like a pipe-organ with the hiccoughs. Peals, carillons, clarions, trumpets, cheers, horse-laughs, and cat-calls all blended into a monstrous cacophony that rose through the rafters and must have reached to the ears of an Aztec god. Lázaro grinning from ear to ear, Cass crumbling to pieces inside, all his guts turning into dry rot and fungi. For the first time in thirty years the town and countryside could band together and give vent to their true feelings about Cass with the most devastating insult known to man: sincere, joyous, gleeful, mocking laughter—the humor of the gods—in which mankind, at rare moments, becomes god-like. These minutes of laughter turned into hours, while Cass turned into stone. Right before our eyes, we watched him ossify.

I heard later that Cass retired at the end of that summer. All I hope is that Lázaro got back to Michoacán with the 75 percent for his niños.

PARKER TYLER:

Kafka and the Surrealists

People who cannot read Kafka say that he is boring. Even people who do read Kafka say that he is boring. One of the triumphs of his style is that it holds the attention in the way a tiresome job holds a man; hence, form has grown out of content. Notably, the arid and gloomy atmosphere that saturates Kafka's writings obtains in situations that are disastrous and unexpected terminations of, or impingements on, *the job*—as in *Metamorphosis,* when the clerk awakens in the morning to find that he has turned into a bedbug, and in *The Trial,* when the bank employee is arrested for something he did not do, and prolonged and distracting negotiations with lawyers and court officials follow. The subject-matter as well as the tone of these stories belong to an inverted or grotesque sort of holiday; the joy that a jaded jobholder would receive from an unannounced vacation is converted, by the perverse nature of the "vacation" in *Metamorphosis,* into despair. In general, the moral of Kafka's art is that no respite from The Job is possible without some variety of disaster.

Two important stories by Kafka differ from the job-terminating or job-impinging pattern: *The Castle* and *Amerika.* In these, on the contrary, a job is the objective of one who is without work. In *Amerika,* the hero is a chaplinesque figure who tramps around trying to earn his keep or live on gratuities. But *The Castle* portrays the nightmare premonitions of someone waiting in an anteroom to clinch the job for which he is applying. It has been noted frequently that Kafka's stories are not mere allegories. Their literal content merges with their symbolic meaning. Thus, while the Castle itself, the heart of the bureaucracy that will approve K.'s appointment, may be considered a symbol for Heaven, it is by no means an allegory of religious ideality. On the contrary, it seems a concretized simile; Kafka is saying that actually clinching a job is like getting into Heaven: extremely difficult because of the material handicap of having been born Man, i.e., of being proud. As the human spirit must humiliate itself to be worthy of entering Heaven, the human job-seeker must humiliate himself in order to win some coveted position. Evident here is the whole European tradition of toadying to high officials and low officials in order to gain some mean appointment, not through merit but through favor. Because K. will not submit to the system of favoritism, his struggle exhausts him and he perishes.

In *The Trial,* K.'s case never comes up, as in *The Castle* he never gets the job for which he believes himself qualified. Psychologically, the interruptions of normal work which lead to K.'s death in *The Trial* and to Gregor's demise in *Metamorphosis* are *welcome* phenomena; that is, the tone and ultimate meaning of the hero's experience can be explained only by supposing that these "conventional" disasters provide the longed-for escape from the ennui of the job.

Since, however, they are not ideal or really desired forms of respite, they carry in them an extension of the very boredom that characterized the set form of behavior they end or modify: the job.

Both *Metamorphosis* and *The Trial* contain *disqualifications* of the job-holder—one a biological disqualification (the bedbug), the other a legal disqualification (the accused citizen). So the hero in each is not "released" from his job, as he would be for a holiday or vacation, but made unworthy of it. The brightest prospect for the unfortunate protagonist of *The Trial* is his moral reinstatement in the job which he holds precariously following his arrest. Both in the magic transformation into the bedbug and in the status of the accused bank employee there occur an intervention of time and an order of mental experience that must be described not as a holiday or any positive deflection of experience but as an *hiatus*. The boredom therefore lies in a condition of suspense.

Part of Kafka's great originality was that what had been known as suspense, or anticipation of happening, was conceived by him as anticipation of continued non-happening: a state in which the negative element of experience is desired. To Gregor and K. any period of time separating the worker from an undesired job is a time of happiness. In melodramas, for example, suspense is *pain*—an ache for the impending crisis to be solved by action already set in motion. In Kafka's stories, suspense is *pleasure*—an ache for the impending crisis *not* to be solved by action already set in motion. Although K.'s arrest in *The Trial* theoretically sets in motion a complex legal procedure which apparently the hero desires to precipitate, it is only on the conscious level of his personality that he so desires; actually, his unconscious is conspiring with the legal authorities to maintain the status quo of *suspense* making him a marked man, a unique fateful figure at his bank. Kafka's heroes become meaningful only under conditions of alienation from work. In *The Castle,* K.'s practical advantage is more or less deliberately sacrificed by him to ideals that, in effect, prevent his appointment to work. The irony is that the underlying dynamic concept of the *total suspension* of work can lead finally only to death. Business will not tolerate an employee involved in an endless legal tangle or ethical arguments by applicants over job-qualification, any more than a family will tolerate a son who has been transformed into vermin. Society demands reasonable action, demands that the applicant take the job assigned and remain qualified to do it "justice"—or perish.

In the ordinary sense, when does suspense become boredom? When an apparently insuperable obstacle looms ahead. In indefinitely postponed crises, one is bored because nothing that is happening really matters, only *what will or may happen* matters. One of the commonest expressions of life is: "I can't stand this suspense." It means that the speaker is bored—terribly bored. The psychology of such people, as the psychology of Kafka's heroes, is that of the prisoner who, imprisoned in time because inactivity is temporarily imposed on him, is by this token also imprisoned in space whether actually under lock and key or not. As K., in *The Trial,* is already a prisoner in his job, he is a prisoner

in the time during which he waits to clear himself of the charge before he can become worthy of the job to which he clings. To be convicted of the mythical crime, for K., would not be to have his status of imprisonment altered, it would merely mean incarceration in a different sort of prison. Meanwhile, his activity continues to be meaningless since it is still not directed toward the end of ideal, or transcendent, freedom. In the case of the imprisoned criminal, everything he does is boring because in itself it does not serve to effect his freedom, which only the passing of time can effect. But on the contrary, it is time itself which Kafka's heroes unconsciously want to stop, for in the end its passing can bring them only death or conditions of work they have ethically rejected.

Naturally, the effect of Kafka's writing must be boring even to the attentive reader, for by its tone it conveys its concern with actions which matter only as they obstruct other actions or anticipate what never comes to pass. What carries a reader from page to page of a book is *expectation* (in the cruder sense, suspense). But Kafka's tone, hopeless and doomed, carries no esthetic of expectation, so only those readers who perceive the profound irony of his pattern can summon the energy to turn his pages. In what purely esthetic aspect does this irony manifest itself? In the interest of *detail* as counterposed to *tone*. Since, in states of boredom, all details in both fragmentary and total environments are commonplace, unpointed with special significance, the reader is faced with a paradox. Only if seen in its true ironic perspective does the commonplace become wonderful in Kafka.

Kakfa's irony consists in the profound dissociation of the personal actor and his environment. As the worker is spiritually alienated from his job even while going through its motions, the accused worker, K., identifies himself eagerly with anything in objective fact consistent with his spiritual alienation from his job. As a new environment, the extraordinary series of events which the accused K. experiences after his arrest is an imaginative projection of his spiritual reaction to his arrest—an objective, concretized negation of everything that was. Essentially a struggle by negation, these experiences are obviously unrealistic, fantastic, nothing that could ever really happen. Nevertheless, they are full of realistic patterns and details, full of identifiable human experiences dissociated from the logical context of life experienced, so to speak, "while on the job."

Finally we have arrived at the esthetic sphere where Kafka (considered a pre-Surrealist) touches the Surrealists. This sphere may be defined as that in which an imaginative pattern, having its own inherent logic, is imposed on a formally illogical series of details making an experence. In the same sphere exists the dream. In art, however, the condition of this superimposition is conscious. The Surrealists obtain their effects (whether in automatic or in semi-automatic texts) by the incongruous juxtaposition of details, in the selection of which the poetic imagination, as such, is more or less active. Here not the brief spans of Surrealist lyric poetry are relevant, but the extended prose of André Breton in *Nadja*. This novelette by the Surrealist leader is a love story in which, because the hero has met the Fatal Woman, every detail in life,

no matter how routine or casual, becomes wonderful in her presence or because of her. In this work, too, the commonplace becomes marvelous, but by a route diametrically opposed to that obtaining in Kafka's writing.

The respective conceptions of love in Breton and Kafka provide the key to this diametric opposition of method. In Breton, fate is love; in Kafka, fate is work, and love the opposite of work: the lyric respite, the humble consoler, on the hard negative road of destiny. The loving women who enter *The Trial* and *The Castle* are tender toward K., but impotent in their efforts to assist him in the project absorbing him. Kafka's conception of love is that of a mind which has not paused to cultivate esthetic disciplines as it was Breton's practice to do. Like his heroes, Kafka never imagined himself as an esthete, for he never imagined himself as the possessor of *leisure*. His style has a perpetual neurotic tension which never relaxes; his is a subtle world which, precluding leisure, cannot be ethically appreciated by the esthete. Only by grace of leisure can the concepts of Surrealism, with their air of vestigial magic (as, for instance, the concept of *objective hazard*), be cultivated. With a highly developed esthetic sense, the expectant lover who waits to encounter the Fatal Woman exists always in a state of impatience, but he is not bored, for he is endlessly busy preparing for such a great event that will carry in its wake as yet untold joys. Breton's hero knows in advance that once the Fatal Woman has appeared, her magic presence will convert every small detail of life into something strange and wonderful—as happens in *Nadja*. Of course, this general state of being is not peculiar to the Surrealists; it is merely that the Surrealists are devout initiates in the preparation for love. Boredom in love, on the other hand, is an experience common to the human race. However, with a highly trained sensibility, Breton's hero finds it unnecessary to fear the post-coitional deflation that is the universal anxiety of lovers.

As Kafka imagined (and as his heroes sought) alienation from existent work, Breton imagined (and his hero sought, and found through love) alienation from existent leisure. Work is boring when it is empty of spiritual gratification, devoid of important objectives or of objects inspiring affection. Likewise its logical opposite, leisure, bores when there is nothing interesting to do, no objects (concrete or abstract) to be contemplatively admired. "Doing nothing" as a form of pleasant occupation was an invention of Oscar Wilde's, and in relation to the present discussion, quite relevant. Wilde knew as well as anyone that there is no such thing as doing nothing; what makes "doing nothing" pleasurable is either mental contemplation (which is "doing nothing" to the materialistically minded vulgarian) or expectation of or preparation for something to do. Even according to tradition, leisure is the condition in which the mind is refined for its intellectual and artistic tasks. The Surrealist esthete, very properly, regards love as both an intellectual and artistic task; to him, love is *love-work;* it is not, as with the great majority of people, primarily an exemption from work, a holiday of the senses. In one respect, therefore, Kafka was a very ordinary man, whose imagination was bound up with leisure conceived as the release from work rather than the opportunity in which to do one's most serious work; it is not that his heroes abhor work as a *possibility*—but that they reject it as a fact—

a social orthodoxy. In the real world today, nearly all men are a little bored with leisure because of the prevalent nervous fatigue and seek holiday indulgences with a certain neurotic desperation; they are unfitted for the proper tasks of leisure, an important one of which is love. It is a kind of pseudo-romantic tradition that love must be the extraordinary and the exorbitant, the baleful ecstasy of the lover who meets death shortly after he has encountered the Fatal Woman, as the male bee does following his marriage with the Queen. The esthetic discipline of love cultivated by the Surrealists abstracts the sting of doom from the romantic tradition and avoids the sterile and spasmodic indulgence in the sexual act that is typical of today.

As the Romantics identified love with death, Kafka identified work with death so that the spiritual and physical absenteeism from work that occupies the action of his stories is but postponement of a final release: death. In the same way, numerous romantic legends provide a great passion which is but the anteroom to death for the lovers. Kafka waits doggedly, eternally, futilely in the anteroom of society for just recognition of his capabilities and his soundness as a worker. As Kafka is a surrealist of work, Breton is a surrealist of leisure. But Breton's hero is fortunate, and K. is unfortunate, because Kafka's concept of practical work excludes the pleasure principle whereas Breton's is based on this principle since his work is love.

One of the reasons for Kafka's wide circulation in translated form and his popularity among modern intellectuals (whereas *Nadja* is still untranslated into English save in brief portions) is his proletarian, or non-esthetic, conception of love, which corresponds, even on the cultural level, with modern scepticism as to the success of all varieties of sexual love. Beyond the sphere of second- and third-rate novels, the predominant conception of love, supported by psychoanalytical myths, is that it constitutes a compulsive act—is a "need" rather than a "luxury" in the emotional sense. Perhaps the most widely accepted odyssey of modern love is the Eliot-hero's transcendence of sexual love by religious love, something in which Auden has followed him. The danger of such a view of sexual love is that it implies an ideology of cultural abstension and sexual pessimism. Kafka, however, avoids this ideology by showing clearly that nothing positive can be gained by the individual apart from perfect economic adjustment, from harmony with work; the criminal charge against K. is but a symptom or metaphor for his essential disharmony with his job. Unlike Breton, Kakfa (that is to say, his typical hero) does not work at love because he knows no erotic triumph.

The important conclusion is that Kafka shows no pessimism about love as love. Hence he and the Surrealists oppose themselves to the religious negaters of economic and sexual problems—Kafka by showing the supreme importance of the interruption of work (his heroes are spiritual "strikers" rather than spiritual "vacationists") and the Surrealists by conceiving love not as a symbol, or fugitive ecstasy, but as indefinite and commonplace duration. Kafka's art proves that in the modern world it is impossible for the individual to take seriously both love and work—unless the latter be *artistic* work.

MARGUERITE YOUNG:

The Contravalid

There is no schemata exclusive of ourselves, no valid—
A pathetic fallacy, but Pope's carnations knew him,
No schemata exclusive of the cripple and accident

And martyred mole who flies among the luna moths of evening.

More beautiful, however, is the contravalid, the mouse-sized insect,
More beautiful, the contravalid, the empire of chance
And old condors roosting in dank palms,
More beautiful than statements resolvable to true or false

And exigency of our logic. The crippled dancer is the dance, at last,
The only truth, the double-headed dwarf of paradox,
Nor breach is there between our error and our wisdom,

The nucleus of the falling stars is both lost and not lost.

Is it island or mainland, this lily-lipped earth?
Is it island or mainland or journeyer surf?
Our thoughts ascending mix with cold Uranus,

Mix with stars extinct or never there but brightening
To the eye in water and in wind.

The existence of an aggregate is not necessary
If no single part of it possesses necessary existence,
If nothing is that is but might be otherwise.

Of heaven, we do not need to go there to be there this night.

Our experience, in any event, is the ghostly offspring of a moment
Whether condors or droves of phoenixes in vacuo,
One heartbeat separating each life and total death.

The circumnavigators of being always err.

Elegy

Reality with universal memory is haunted,
Throughout the universe is memory.

The I who think the infinite am finite
But droves of porcupine migrating in a steel starlight
And seaward-flying crows,

The transitory hieroglyphic is not faded
Nor that reproach of distance in our eyes,

The angel in the cloud or maybe a bittern
Emitting from its breast a golden light,
The fly-catcher lily, an eyeless Atlas billowing white

Like variant light. Such ghostly starbeams converge. Earth seems where
earth is not,
A point in that subjective space, a battleground of the
lyre cocks,

Remora, a baby's hand, barnacles, geraniums,
Little owls who turn and stare at their pursuer.
The deceived are here deceived forever

For the consciousness contains what the consciousness contains
And our God is not the God of Weight

But ourselves, a stranger degrees between our being and non-being.
Reality is wild and on the wing.
An apple toward the sky is always falling.

HOWARD MOSS:

The Frozen Lake

All roads are dangerous; they lead to towns
No kiss can open for a view of love.
We all came crowding from the eastern train,
Shy dreamers frozen on the separate floes,

Kicking our heels up like the skating girls
Glued desperately to the enchanted pond.

Credit was all the fever in o[illegible]ckets
And love, the number on the [illegible]ily phone;
Bowing too deeply for the native grace,
We moved among the terraces and skies,
Alien Bluebeards with the locked-up room
Twisting the key between two souvenirs.

After the immortal books were read
(Radiator odor and blue snow outside),
We watched the gladiators, lions lunge,
The football heroes with their muscles primed
Seeming from the crisp and farthest tier
A bloody opera that would disappear.

But now that theater which intrigued the sense
Shows nothing but integuments of war;
Rightly we twist the circling arrow back
To find the graph that wears the early sign,
But there is nothing but the scholar's dome
Serene beneath the therapeutic sun.

Eden, subtracted from its margin,
Leaves Eden still; foolishly we scan
The maps and catalogues, the printed list
Which adds to nothing, multiplies one scene:
A boyish figure stepping from a train,
The blank of winter, and the snow again.

Escape, as usual, records its tightened rules:
An endless circling through the mawkish town,
Clutching on porches, garbled talk at bars,
Or captured puzzles of the flying jazz
(Ill trumpet mated to endorsing mouth):
Nothing of love but its lamented drouth.

Here or there, night is no lonelier
For even Plato or the rented furniture
Have their own secrets, give them up to none
Who, transient, begged the region of this town;
Or walks again in dreams that castled hill
Which thundered once, and now is still.

PAUL BARTLETT and ELIZABETH WINTERS:

The Golden Gate

Steve Conrad lay on the floor of his shack. It was midday and no air was stirring. The sound of the nearby surf came in slowly as though it were weighted down by the noon heat. Sand birds were scurrying up and down the beach, feeding and crying. Conrad listened to their shrill cries and watched a spider eat a fly in its web overhead. The palm fronds that made the roof of the shack were thin and the sun chinked through in many places.

It was a small shack with a sand floor. The sand had been swept against the walls in sloping curves; in a corner of the room there was a sunken place for the charcoal stove; beside the wall, half-buried in the sand, stood the water olla and around the olla were a few pots. A few polished abalone shells were tied to the wall fronds, fronds that Conrad had brought in recently from the palmero behind the shack.

Petra came in and stooped down to start the charcoal fire. She was small, Zapotecan. She had a tiny thin nose, an immature mouth and kind eyes. She moved easily setting the metate in front of her. As she crouched on the ground she tucked her barefeet under her blue skirt. Beneath her white blouse her breasts stood firm and high. The blouse was embroidered and there was something about the twists in the embroidery that was like the braids that hung over her shoulders.

"Are you feeling all right now?" she asked.

"Sure, I'm all right," Conrad said.

"You didn't sleep very well."

"I don't remember," he said.

She began patting out the tortillas, waving off the flies that gathered around the corn dough. It had been a good while since Conrad had talked in his sleep; she wondered how many times he had repeated *Golden Gate*. She squatted by the fire, fanning it with a square palm fan, and looked at him. He was lying with his eyes closed, his legs jack-knifed up from the palm mat. He wore a pair of dirty white trousers, tied with a rope around his waist; his chest and arms were hairy and his sandy hair was uncombed; she noticed he needed a shave.

Petra's parrot came down from the ridgepole and walked over Conrad's legs; it stumbled along and pulled at the rope around his waist and cocked its head at him.

"Get off of me," Conrad said but the parrot didn't move.

When Petra had the beans and tortillas hot, she made tacos and handed them to Conrad. He raised himself on his elbow and grunted; the parrot

fluttered off and began to peck around in the sand near Petra.

The sound of the beach birds—their plaintive crying—came in now and then and the palm fronds in the roof rustled.

"Maybe it's going to get cooler," Petra said.

"It never gets cooler," Conrad said. He pushed half a taco into his mouth. "It gets hotter every year. Been here eight years and it gets hotter every year."

Petra smiled.

"Hasn't it been cooler since I came?" she asked.

Conrad grunted. He thought of those first days. . . . Blowin' and rainin' like hell, no place to sleep, bugs. . . . Didn't know a crab from a lobster in those days. Made off with all my food. Almost drove me nuts.

"Gimmie another taco," he said.

He sat up and hunched his bare feet under him; the parrot ran up and pecked at his toes.

"Why don't you tie the damn bird up?"

Petra called it and coaxed it on her wrist.

"Deme la pata," she said. The bird held out its claw. "Come Chula, nice Chula." The bird pecked her fingers gently and then peered up at her and wheezed.

"Correo, correo," it wheezed.

Conrad ate a few more tacos and then went to the door and leaned against the post; he was heavy and his shoulder shook the post and the frail roof. He rubbed the hair on his chest and looked out.

"The sea's calm today," he said in English and then spoke to her in Spanish. "Guess I'll go out this afternoon."

Petra sighed and busied herself over the fire. He hadn't been out for a month; she had hoped he had forgotten. She took out the unburned charcoal sticks and set them back in the jarro for next time. A giant cockroach ran over the floor and she watched the parrot chase it. When she looked up, Conrad was gone. She ran to the doorway and saw him heading for the shore; she snatched her rebozo and followed him through the hot sand. She moved lightly, swiftly, her skirt clinging to her slender body.

Conrad was examining his canoe; it was a hollowed cedar log: he had cut down the tree and made the canoe himself, using native tools. He ran his hand along the gunwale, looking for cracks and rough spots in the wood, then tilted his paddles in the sun and went over them carefully, noting with satisfaction how smooth he kept them. The red cedar was good to look at; it had taken on a polish with the years and always shimmered when wet. He was as proud of the canoe as he was of his shells, often spending hours refining and scraping every inch of the hull.

He threw out pieces of broken shells and cleaned out the canoe, handing Petra his tackle, a net and a coil of rope.

"Ya?" she said.

Conrad nodded, his blue eyes suddenly happy.

"Guess I'll lay off for a while," he said. "We've got enough to sell in town for what we need."

Petra walked to the little clump of palms where Conrad had his leanto and hammock and she put away his fishing things. The polished shells were stacked on a rough table and a bench alongside. There were abalones, big periwinkles, mother-of-pearl oysters, conch, pearly nautilus and white-branched coral. She looked about the shed for a minute, her finger in her mouth. Yes, there was enough; Steve had been working hard. He would get a lot of money in town. She could ask him to bring frijoles, maize, coffee . . . she hurried back to the beach, thinking what else she needed for the house.

He threw in the iron anchor and Petra helped him push the canoe into water. She laughed as the spray splashed high and wet her. Each had a paddle and they struck out hard through the surf. Once through the breakers it was easy going and soon Conrad had the canoe lined up with the shack and was peering over the side, his hands shading his eyes.

"There she is down there," he said.

Petra looked down too, saw the ship; it was very dim, very low, half-black, half-brown, wavering. It was keeled over and the super-structure was almost buried in sand, not even the butt of a mast showing. Petra glanced away.

"There's a shark," she said.

A big tiburon came slicing through the water not far off, grey, white, fast.

"I'd have gotten the gold a long time ago if it hadn't been for those goddamn things. Why the hell don't the bastards go some where else? Always hangin' round here. Throw something at him, Petra!"

Petra picked a rock out of the anchor box and hurled it.

Conrad paddled the canoe farther out to sea and then circled back to the other end of the wreck, over the bow: he was following a current, semi-drifting and paddling.

"There's the hole I made with the dynamite," he said. "Look close, maybe that's where the gold is. The hell of it is, without dynamite I get nowhere."

He let Petra paddle out toward the horseshoe curve of the bay, where bay met Pacific. The wind was cool; the sun had long ago ceased bothering him; eight years in the tropics had done that. Off to the side, a manta ray leaped into the air and crashed back with a two ton slap; then another manta ray leaped, silver. The water closed over it without a ripple. Conrad leaned back and lit a cigarette.

Cloud shadows were blowing over the rocks at the opening of the bay and waves went splintering high; the hills across the bay were dark green. A frigate bird scissored overhead. Cormorants were dark grey specks near the headland.

When they got back they dragged the canoe up on the beach and Conrad walked off to his hammock.

He talked in his sleep again that night and Petra grew restless, trying to hear. All she could make out was *Golden Gate.* She didn't like it when he talked English. She didn't like it when he mumbled around the house. But she liked it even less when he sulked and said nothing. There were days when he hardly spoke to her at all.

Two and a half million, he muttered. *Coming in the bay . . . rocks . . . maybe the wind. Damn those sharks. Forty feet under . . .*

The parrot shifted on its perch below the ridgepole.

Through the sound of the surf came the call of some night bird; it circled high over the shack, then continued its flight northward. Only the fireflies remained on the beach, sprinkling the wild grass with their green and white lights. They rose in the air but never drifted out towards the ocean.

It was an easy walk from Barra de la Navidad into town. Petra helped him pack the shells in two hemp bags and watched him set out for the highway beyond the palmero. He followed the sandy path and was soon in the open where the sea glinted between groves of mesquite and mimosa. It was a clear cool morning and Conrad whistled as he walked. It felt good to be shaved and have on clean clothes again; Petra had done a good job on his hair. He would stop at the Copa for a few drinks—there were a lot of sailors in from the Chilean tanker.

Town, busy streets, market full of people, puestos, trying to get good prices—Petra waited anxiously all day long. Would he bring back everything she'd asked for? Of course he would buy his dynamite first. And then his whiskey. There might not be much left. She tried not to think about it, cutting a blouse from an old dress her mother had given her. Sometimes he brought her a present, a ribbon, a pair of huaraches. . . . It frightened her to think of him going off alone with the dynamite. What if he were killed? And maybe there was no gold. Loco, the people called him. She had heard lots of stories about the wreck. Some said the ship had struck a reef far out at sea long before foundering at Barra de la Navidad. Who knew if there were two and a half million in the ship? There wasn't so much money in the world. What did Steve want with it?

He was in a good humor when he came back. He tossed one bag on the sleeping mat and placed the other gently on the floor.

"There you are," he said. "You can look."

Silently, her face shy, she knelt on the mat and began to remove the packages from the bag. He had forgotten nothing. On the bottom there was a picture of the Virgin.

"Gracias, señor," she said softly.

Conrad laughed.

He was off early the next morning, everything ready. The sea was rough and the long beach line broke white at the water's edge. Pelicans were diving and that meant that schools of fish were running. A pelican flew up as Conrad pushed off from the shore.

Petra waited till he was gone, then ran to the clump of palms to watch him. She had prayed to the Virgin; she was sure he would be safe.

Near the wreck, Conrad crouched in the canoe and lit the fuse of a dynamite stick, then he hurled it out over the water. There was an explosion and the water shot up. Petra knew that was for the sharks, to scare them off.

Conrad brought the canoe closer to the wreck; again he tossed his paddle in the bow; this time he lit sticks and put them in a can. He sealed the lid on tight and dropped over the gunwale into the water, a heavy rock tied to his

waist. He shoved the canoe towards shore and sank out of sight.

Petra waited, breathless. He was going down fast. . . . he was placing the can. . . . he was cutting himself free from the rock. . . . he was swimming away from the ship. . . . There was a muffled thunder and a geyser of water leaped up and out.

Steve! She ran to the water's edge. She didn't see him. The canoe was half way to shore. Then his head appeared.

They went back in the canoe together and she dropped the anchor and he dove down. He stayed a long time. She leaned far over the gunwale, trying to see him.

"Steve," she yelled.

He came up and she helped him into the canoe.

"Nada," he gasped.

"What did you see?" she asked.

"The water's clear enough . . . the hole's bigger . . . but no gold, no barrels, nothing!" He breathed heavily. "I'm going down again."

Before he could dive again, tiburons appeared, white shadows under the water, fins riding high.

Sunday morning the sounds of the church bells came faintly across the mainland. Petra was cleaning a fish outside the shack when she heard voices and looked up.

"Some men are coming here," she told Conrad. He got up from the mat and came outside. Heat shimmered up from the sand and hurt his eyes.

"What the hell they doing out this way?" he said. "I don't want nobody nosing around here."

Petra took the fish into the shack and made the parrot jump down from the door.

Three men walked up to Conrad; they were well dressed, had on tropic hats and tropic suits. One of the men introduced himself.

"I'm the new Consul," he said. Conrad nodded vaguely. "We've heard about you. Understand you've been living here a long time."

Conrad said nothing.

"Er, I'd like to have you meet Mr. Atkins, who represents the La Paz Company, and this is Mr. Kincaide, an engineer, one of our boys, you know."

The men shook hands, smiles were uneasy, Conrad was barely polite. La Paz, he thought quickly, that was the salvage company from Baja California. And Kincaide looked like the government type.

"Pretty hot," Kincaide said, trying to find an opening.

"What do you know about the Golden Gate?" Mr. Atkins asked bluntly, preferring to come to the point.

Conrad squinted out at the bay and smiled slowly.

"Naturally," said the Consul, "these men want all the help they can get. If you can help them, they'll make it worth your while, isn't that so?" Atkins and Kincaide nodded.

"What do you want to know?" asked Conrad gruffly.

"Where the wreck is," said Atkins, "its exact position, anything you can tell us about it. We're coming back to make a thorough investigation. Diving equipment and that sort of thing."

Conrad shoved his feet into the sand and laughed.

"You won"t find much," he said.

Mr. Kincaide's eyebrows went up.

"Why, she's sunk off there," Atkins said. He coughed and looked at the Consul.

"Sure," said Conrad, "she's out there, what's left of her."

"Yes," said Atkins, "we know. Got the whole history, blueprints of the ship, and so on. We've gone into this pretty carefully, you understand. Got all the facts, about the fire, how Captain Ingalls tried to beach her, the whole record from the day she left San Francisco. We're not interested in wasting time or money, you know."

"I'm sure Mr. Conrad's going to be helpful," said the Consul. "After all, two and a half million's a lot of money."

Conrad waited quietly.

"You'll get your share, don't worry," said Atkins dryly. Kincaide wiped his forehead and pushed his helmet back on his head.

"Well, man, what do you say?" asked the Consul, becoming impatient.

"There's my canoe," said Conrad, motioning with his head.

Atkins started down the beach and the men followed. Petra watched them from the door, the parrot perched on her wrist.

At the shore line, near the beached canoe, Atkins stopped and pointed.

"How far out is she?"" he asked Conrad.

"About three hundred yards," he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

"Deep?"

Conrad pulled at the rope around his waist.

"You don't see her, do you?" he said. Kincaide stepped forward.

"How is she settled?" he asked gently. Conrad shoved his feet into the sand.

"On her side, stern down.'"

"Port or starboard?"

"Starboard," said Conrad.

"That's all we want to know for today," said Atkins. "We'll look you up later, Mr. Conrad."

"Then you don't want to go out and see her?" he said slowly.

Kincaide nodded, "Thanks, old man, not right now. We'll come back some other time in a tug and get a good look at her."

When they had gone, Conrad sat on the gunwale of his canoe; he watched the sand crabs scurrying in and out of their holes. A big one sidled past him and then stopped uncertainly; Conrad crushed it with his heel. Eight years and now to be cheated, stamped out like a crab. The canoe, the shack, all those shells—wasted, the whole set-up of a man's life knocked to pieces. Damn the La Paz Company, damn Kincaide! He got up and hurled an empty coconut far into the water. Telling *me* the story, them and their blueprints!

How many times he had gone over every detail, fixed them in his mind, lived through those days: the California gold rush, the adventurers and fortune-seekers, the four-masters sailing around the Horn up to Frisco, then more gold from the Yukon, from all over the world men driven mad, the toughest of them. . . . And then the *Golden Gate,* pride of the coast, a beauty when she was full-rigged and under all plain sail. She had made many runs to New York, her crew the best for the job. Captain Ingalls had been famous; the two and a half million cargo had been put in his charge. The ship also carried lumber. Fifteen days out at sea, she caught fire and tried to put in to a Mexican port. Captain Ingalls roped himself to the wheel. Three of the crew went crazy. A storm finished her. . . .

Conrad stared out at the water. It was his ship now, his job. Tug, diving equipment! He spat on the sand. He'd give the dirty bastards a run for their money!

Petra served him his lunch in silence. She hardly dared look at him, waiting for him to speak. Halfway through the meal, he pushed his plate away and got up.

"Aren't you going to eat the fish?" she asked anxiously.

He took a bottle of tequila from the shelf, wiped off the mouth and took a long drink.

"I'll be gone for the afternoon," he said, "and don't look for me like you did last time." He grabbed his shirt and hat from a nail on the wall and went out.

Petra stared at the fish and began to cry.

He didn't come back till next morning and didn't want any breakfast. His eyes were bloodshot and his manner surly.

"I'm going to town," he said. "I don't know when I'll be back, see? If anybody comes, tell 'em I've gone to see Davy Jones."

Petra looked at him with wide, pained eyes. What did he mean? She watched him walk along the beach toward the road and crossed herself and murmured a prayer for him. She went in and picked up the basket she was weaving; the parrot fluttered on to her shoulder, calling correo, correo.

On the road, Conrad hailed a truck and climbed up on a load of sugar cane. The road followed the ocean, passing palm groves, thatched huts, and fishermen's nets hung out to dry. The ocean was dark blue between patches of mesquite and mimosa. In the harbor of the town, he saw a tramp ship from Australia. Probably hides. The wharf would stink for a month.

He dropped off the truck at the playa of the carpenters. Men were repairing and building boats under thatched sheds, their brown bodies stripped to the waist. He looked up and down the rows of sheds and then walked towards someone he knew.

For the next twenty-four hours he went around trying to find people who would sympathize with his stories about his sick wife, his bad heart, his withheld wages. At last he had enough money to buy the dynamite he needed and he got back to his shack in the afternoon.

Before the sun had reached the hills, he was out on the water. He had three hours till sundown. Everything was ready. Though it was very hot, there was

a brisk wind and the water was white-capped. He paddled violently against the waves, swearing at the heat, at the water that sloshed into his canoe. From time to time he glanced toward the rocky curve of the bay, on the lookout for the tug. The intense sky hurt his eyes, already smarting from salt spray. He worked quickly, savagely, recklessly. He was back in Hongkong, fighting swamps in Sumatra, doing things for the hell of it. Each time the water cleared he dove; the cold water felt good to him; he was fascinated by the changes after each explosion. The wreck seemed to be settling at the bow and a wall of sand pushed against the deck. He stood in the bow of the canoe and waved to Petra, laughing, as he had when his mother saw him dangling a water mocassin from his raft on the river. He had been ten then.

On his last trip down, he could not see clearly. He was beginning to get tired. He bobbed to the surface, was struck by a large wave and swam hard. He dragged himself into the canoe again and threw the last stick of dynamite, for good measure.

He grew restless waiting for the tug. Petra noticed the change and fretted under it, wondering what he was going to do. She went out every morning to bring back their day's supply of fish. Cigarette butts and empty coconut shells littered the sand around Conrad's hammock. From where he lay he could see the ocean horizon; the sun moved up and sank down again; shore mist swept in and then was gone; clouds beyond the headland meant a wind was due. A pelican bobbed on the water, that was all.

He could see the wavering plant life under the water, the sea ferns, the angel fish and gallos, the jelly fish and eels; he could see the sand, sand seeping in from the sea slope, the ship settling under the weight of the sand wall, the last timbers of the ship being buried. If they wanted anything they'd have to dig for it.

He was sitting in front of the shack when the tug appeared around the headland. It strung out a thread of smoke as it moved into the bay. As it came inshore, Conrad could make out figures on the deck. The tug was low and squat and dark blue; the whistle sounded and a bell clanged. Conrad saw Atkins at the bow: he was the tall one. The one in the panama, leaning against the cabin, would be the Consul. There were some other men, Kincaide among them no doubt.

Conrad started down the beach as Atkins waved a megaphone.

" . . . you bring. . . . Come out in your canoe!" Conrad heard him yell.

Conrad paddled out to the tug and waved the pilot toward the wreck; he swung close and then paddled toward the bay. A bell sounded on the tug and the propeller churned and she swung round, waves chopping against the bow. Little by little the throbbing of her engine lessened; then it stopped; the anchor rattled down and a rope ladder was lowered overside.

"Want to come up?" called the Consul.

"No, I'll watch from here," Conrad said.

The stern of the tug was littered with lobster traps. Atkins began shouting orders. Conrad's eyes narrowed, hardening; he dug his paddle into the water, his hands gripping the wood like a vise. Two divers appeared; they were

strong fellows, young. They were dressed in shorts and their lean brown bodies glistened in the sun. They were probably pearl divers from Baja, California.

They lugged their equipment to a bench and began to get ready. The windowed eye of a diving helmet flashed. They had oxygen tanks and lead belts and lead shoes. Before dropping down the rope ladder one of the divers took a swig out of a bottle.

A pelican swooped by.

It was strangely quiet. The slap of water against the tug was all. The sun was strong.

Conrad circled around.

Bubbles came up from the divers; their life-lines were yellow; the men on the tug leaned over; the pilot was smoking a clay pipe; the greasy engineroom man, cap pulled back on his head, held a rifle in the crotch of his arm.

After a while, the extra lines jerked and Atkins shouted to Kincaide and the crew pulled and brought up some timbers. They were examined excitedly. In the midst of the excitement someone saw a tiburon.

"Shoot the damn thing," the Consul yelled.

The guard took a pot shot.

Conrad looked amused.

Soon the life-lines jerked and the crew hauled up the divers; they clung a while to the rope ladder and then climbed on deck. When the helmets were removed everybody began talking; crowding round; Conrad pulled alongside the rope ladder but couldn't make out what was said. Presently, Atkins leaned over and shouted.

"We're gonna dynamite. Better clear out. You can come up if you like."

Conrad gave him a dirty look and started for shore. He beached his canoe and sat on the bow to watch; the tug up-anchored, drifted, dropped anchor again.

The dynamiting was carefully timed: the diver hung to the rope ladder and someone on deck pushed the handle of the detonator. Water spouted and gushed. In a few moments the divers went down to place the second charge.

The operations continued intermittently all day: bells clanged, the men ate, the tug swung to new positions, the divers worked on deck, checking their equipment and replenishing their oxygen tanks, voices came across the water, there were yells and rifle shots.

Petra squatted in the doorway of the shack, waiting to give Conrad his lunch. There was a dismal expression on her face. She let the parrot peck at her and stroked its head with cold fingers.

Conrad walked around in the clump of palms. He lay down in his hammock, smoked, got up and went inside the leanto, yanked off a porcupine fish hanging by a string to dry. It was ready for a coat of shellac. He got out a bottle and started to brush the spiny, balloon-shaped skin. Might fetch two pesos, he thought. Suddenly he threw it on the sand and went out.

By God, if they knocked a plank out of his ship!

"Get me a coconut," he hollered, seeing Petra in the doorway.

Late in the afternoon, the tug pulled out and headed for the open bay.

Conrad watched its smoke curl against the sky, a smile of satisfaction on his face.

For a week, the tug made daily trips into the bay. For a week, Conrad watched and waited, saw the tug come, saw it go, made early morning trips to the wreck by himself. He was satisfied. It took a whole salvage company and the whole U. S. government, along with tug, divers and all the rest, to do what he, Steve Conrad, had been doing by himself. All by himself. No, that was wrong, the whole salvage company, the whole U. S. government, couldn't do what he had done.

Petra found him good company. There was a gleam in his eyes, as though he were playing a secret game and enjoying it. She wished the tug would come back every day. Maybe he liked seeing the tug out there and hearing the bells. The men were Americans, like him.

At the end of the week, Conrad received a little check from the Consul for his service in locating the wreck. The next morning he went to town and the tug didn't come back. Petra waited anxiously all day. She swept the shack and prepared the food and kept looking at the Virgin's picture. Once she thought she heard the tug returning to the bay and she ran out.

Had Conrad gone away with the tug? Maybe he wasn't coming back. He had a check; it would last him a long time. She ate nothing and was unable to sleep that night.

During the next two days, her anxiety turned to fear. She couldn't go after him; he had forbidden her to look for him. Maybe he didn't want to fish and polish shells any more. Maybe they had found the gold. The Americans might have told him to come with them somewhere else.

Storm clouds gathered over the bay and the air grew oppressive. There was no wind and the waves flattened out until the water took on a glassy surface. The heat became sticky; even the birds seemed aware of the change. The long dry season was almost over. The fronds of the palm trees drooped, as though begging for rain.

Petra made up her bed in the doorway and lay there listening. The night surf rose and fell heavily, the crickets set up a whirring in the palmero, a breath of wind came through the thatched walls. A firefly flew into the hut. She watched its speck of green flash in the darkness, then there was lightning and thunder.

Towards noon, she saw him coming along the beach; it was beginning to rain; he was carrying his shirt and shoes and his hair was wild. He staggered up to the shack, muttering and singing to himself. His pants were stained with grease and he looked unseeingly at her.

She ran into the shack and began patting out tortillas hurriedly. Loco, the people said. What if it were true?

He threw himself down on the mat, turned over and began to snore. She stopped patting the tortillas and looked at him, then quietly picked up his shirt and shoes. It was not the first time he had gone off like this, returned like this. But this time it was different. Had he been in a fight with the Americans? His face was swollen and his hands were cut. She sat in the corner, afraid to disturb him.

The rain drummed on the roof and drops began to fall through the thatch.

When he awoke, he asked for water, drank it sleepily and then fell back on the mat.

She watched him all afternoon; the slightest move startled her; she didn't bother to eat. Maybe he was sick. She wondered if she should wash his face, comb back his hair.

He awoke towards evening and slept again after he ate. She lit a candle and lay down so she could watch him in case he needed her—her eyes were heavy and her legs felt tired.

In the morning, Conrad woke looking rested. He yawned loudly, stretched his arms and began pounding the sides of his chest.

"Petra!" he roared. Seeing her face, he broke into a grin. He pulled her down beside him and playfully yanked at her braids. Her fear amused him for a moment, then he let her go.

He stood up and frowned at his trousers and felt his bristly chin and walked slowly toward the door. It had stopped raining and the air was clear; the sand looked clean and hard.

"I'm going for a swim," he said and went down to the water.

He spent the day loafing: swam, loafed, ate, slept, swam. He loved the place as never before.

He drank again that night, looking happy.

"Here's to our ship," he said. "Did you hear me, Petra, our ship?"

"Sí," she said, "sí."

He pushed his glass into her hand.

"Drink 'er down, Petra. They're gone, you understand? The whole damn bunch, divers, tug, all of them. Gone for good. They're never coming back. They didn't find anything, said it wasn't worth while. The Consul told me."

He put his arm around her and whirled her about the room, singing at the top of his voice. He kept talking and drinking until Petra could no longer keep her eyes open.

Early next morning she woke frightened, he wasn't beside her on the mat. As she sprang up, he looked in the doorway, laughing.

"Better get up, boba," he said. "Never get anything done sleeping like that."

She stared at him in confusion, ashamed he had wakened before her. He was combed and shaved.

"I'll have your breakfast ready right away, señor," she murmured apologetically.

"Remember, I'm hungry," he boomed. "A working man has to eat, you know."

Between mouthfuls he bragged about the weather.

"It's gonna be swell for fishing," he said. "Guess I've had enough vacation. Look at me, gettin' soft an' fat. Won't be able to do any diving. They say there are some fine porcupine fish over at Boca de la Cuesta. Saw some coral from over there too—coral that big! In a month we'll have enough for all we need, eh Petra?"

C. V. BROWER:

The Nature of Creative Activity

(for Madeline)

we'll make them all wonderful
and black and bloody just like us

they will tell you all their myths
but you mustn't believe them
for they are the spinners of death

do you remember the story of the iron dogs?
we can't all be melted down to nice round bullets
but we can pull triggers can't we kid?
yes sir that's just what we can do

and they wait patiently
for you and me all the while preening
their hard black fur

they will leave you to hold the husk of history
while white worms devour the bleeding meat

A Theory of the Leisure Class

the natives were among the most
peculiar to my experience
and travels

having murdered the sun
on the third day of the week
of the dollar

they in order to keep it well
and to their reasoning
fruitfuly occupied (sic)

put time in little gold boxes
with straps or preferably
chains of the same metal

bejeweled its tiny guts
with as many as 21 rubies
and then (and this was truly

amazing) wore it upon
the wrist somewhat
in the manner of a manacle

Musette: Their Colors Were Many

o the black

I have sent all the madonnas away
and the little golden saints too
even with their soft blue and white veils
the pretty virgins seemed out of place
and frankly I questioned their martyrdom

the grey

Catherine, she I discovered
to have a cancer upon her left breast
large and well developed
this disease among others
was spread among them all
truly none remained without taint

and the red

only the angels I allowed to stay
they warm me with the silvering breath
of their great shining wings

o the white

MARJORIE BRACE:

Thematic Problems of the American Novelist

"One should be so highly developed aesthetically that one can appreciate ethical problems aesthetically, or it's a poor outlook for ethics."—Kierkegaard.

In recent years we have had an intensive and skillful criticism of American poetry. Our novels are seldom examined with the same care. They are reviewed, and they are lined up in squads to be "surveyed." But when the heavy guns of a serious and exacting criticism are trained on even the best contemporary novel it is—with few exceptions—at once pulverized by the force of the explosion, and we find that what is being criticized is not the book, but a culture. Of course a critic is never far from such cultural comment, but a book does not have to be obliterated in the process; it may have values of such depth and complexity that when we discuss them we *are* talking about a culture, and need not be constantly referring to social lacks that have enforced the book's insufficiency. It is the omission of such values that makes our novels so impervious, in a final sense, to criticism, so glassy, so self-contained—and so breakable.

Our poetry, in contrast, is increasingly flexible and generative of speculation, as is the "treatise," that whole literature of ideas which, as Eric Russell Bentley has remarked, has taken the place of the novel as a center of cultural energy. To glance through the literary quarterlies, or a collection of "new writing," is to notice how limply, with what absence of urgency, the fiction lies among the vigors of the essays and the sharp tensions of the poetry. One indication of the impoverishment of our fiction is that a house like New Directions, with non-commercial standards, should have published, that I recollect, only one American novel. One gets the impression that, except for those writers who naturally conform to conventional publishing requirements, the novel—in which category one may include short stories—is being superseded by an experimental mixture of autobiography, philosophy and prose-poem.

Is this not because fiction depends more than other literary forms on social values utilizable by the artist? And have we not failed to analyze just how those values influence the construction of a novel, and its theme? On every side these days one reads the plaint of critics that books such as Scott Fitzgerald's had an "insufficient frame of reference." The accusation has been taken up enthusiastically by journalistic critics who use it to support their demand for "morality" in art. As their interpretation of literary morality is that a simplified, optimistic ethical formula be supplied complete with each work, and since such decrees vitiated American art for a century, writers have tended to repudiate the entire context of the idea. But because popular criticism would hold that Proust, for example, had an inadequate frame of reference, and that Joyce was not an

intensely moral writer, there is no reason to cling to a barren theory that the value of art has no relation to the value of the thought it expresses. If aesthetically insensitive people misuse terms we need not, in defiance, ourselves refuse to employ terms correctly.

But the evasion that is made is to apply lenient standards of judgment to fiction. We ask of poetry and discursive thinking that they relate experience to some general truth, and we attempt to estimate how far they succeed in conveying a rational and valuable idea. Fiction is tolerantly allowed a smaller scope; it is permitted to close rather than to open any vista of thought. For this is the only way we know to give our novelists freedom to *avoid* general truths that we feel would lead, in their case, to falsification. And this is because the novelist's general truths are inseparable from those of the audience which is his subject, more broadly and yet confiningly his subject than it is that of other literary workers.

The poet may draw material from his own exclusive sensibility to the social scene; furthermore, he has great liberty of technique in his essential field of creating imagery from unbounded sensuous perceptions. The worker in ideas has a similarly free range. The indifference or incomprehension of an audience may be personally distressing but it need not inhibit the flow of logical thought. But the intellectual or sensuous content of fiction is subordinate to its import, and that import is tacit, interpretive. It is not enough for a story-teller to possess a high level of awareness. He must create situations which, on that level, symbolize a general social emotion.

If situations of depth are to be invented they must be based on thoughts and feelings interacting fundamentally in society. And as situation is a result of belief, the profundity of the novel's situations rests upon the profundity of society's beliefs. A great novel is an aspect of prevailing experience, so much so that with the passage of time it appears to be a product of a common perception rather than of a unique mind. That is why so many novels seem to have an underlying point of view alien and even inimical to that of the author, so that his beliefs become irrelevant to the subject in a way that philosopher's never, and a poet's seldom, can. But when social emotion is attached to meretricious or trivial beliefs the novelist is also handicapped more than other artists. His problem becomes both technical and moral, for his work is utterly dependent upon the possibility of that just and exact discrimination among human values which is the source of illuminating situations. If social feeling for what constitutes morality is defective, his only chance at honest writing, apparently, is to narrow the field of his interest, limit his implications. It is the realization of this that has made us require so little of the novel.

The break between qualities necessary to literature and their plausible application is especially acute in America. The major European novelists, from Dostoievski and Tolstoy, Flaubert and Stendhal, to our contemporaries, have worked within a richness of experience and on a plane of values unapproached by any American but Henry James. In recent years, and with affinitive alienations, D. H. Lawrence, for example, confronting a social and

moral sterility, proceeded to urge new values, re-form ancient ones. André Gide has been intellectually animated and technically inspired by features of moral nihilism. It is a curiosity, a passion, about social lacks that distinguishes from ours the work of these writers, as it does that of Forster, Silone, Mann, Huxley, Malraux, Koestler. Such artists are involved in a Laocoön-like struggle with the forces of their age, but they are not, as artists, defeated by them. A means of social reference is retained. European writers, as H. J. Kaplan has lately pointed out, superimpose upon the work of novelists like Hemingway and Faulkner ideas and meanings intellectually and emotionally deeper than the original concepts of their authors.

D. H. Lawrence suggested a reason for this difference of response when he remarked that "there is a new feeling in the old American classics, far more than in the modern American books, which are pretty empty of any feeling and proud of it." That "new feeling" was the utterance of a new culture, a new sort of perception, a mating of Puritanism with wilderness that produced the singular, grave and shadowy passion we find in Hawthorne and Thoreau. Melville and Emily Dickinson. There sounded through them an original voice in literature, one that in its measureless "newness" took on a compulsive force and continued to haunt us, the more so because it was abruptly silenced. A nurturing culture has perhaps never been so thoroughly corrupted as the Puritan heritage was by the stress of an industrialism hostile to all its inner moral obsessiveness. The small remnants of its ethic that were kept were distorted into a means of contracting experience rather than widening it, so that the term "moral," as applied to art, fell into such disrepute that freedom for the artist appeared conditional on abandoning his whole tradition.

It is true that a comparable revolt occurred among European realistic novelists, but for them there had been no such wholesale destruction of a heritage of belief. While the work of Flaubert, for example, suffers from a poverty of content, nevertheless Madame Bovary, like the hero of Balzac's *Lost Illusions,* departs from certain permanent truths of thought and feeling; the social milieu of both had deteriorated from a referable excellence; the society described is one which might be questioned on terms understandable within the social framework. But the American writer had no such standard. He was like one in a country long occupied by enemy forces, where the past had been all but obliterated from the popular mind by an alien culture, so that genuine protest had become inexpressible, or merely eccentric. As Henry James once put it, Americans were "the famished race, the disinherited of art," for depth in art implied a "moral element," and that element, in America, had come to mean an acceptance of a morality in which art had no place. Psychologically speaking, the parents had been symbolically murdered and the consequent guilt erased from consciousness. The problem in its entirety was denied. That denial became our basic theme. The American novelist presented situations in which the lack of moral value was itself the aesthetic import.

James Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy—perhaps the most honest and consistent of our naturalist novels—illustrates the potentialities and restrictions of

that theme. It is a book weakened not by inner defects but from an inability to offer any expansion of experience. Within its given limits, existence would seem to have a merely entomological interest. There is no tragedy, for there is no possibility of greatness; there is no conflict, for there is no opposition of values. The characters less frustrated, or more "successful" than Studs—the business men, the priests, the suggested power who dictate their standards—are on a moral level more barbarous than that of Studs, since they find on it an incentive to action, and he cannot. The alternative to his dissolution is a yielding to a system of money-values, ethical savagery and spiritual emptiness. The impact of this absence of choice is so powerful throughout Farrell's work that when, in his later novels, a more thoughtful, sensitive protagonist is offered, we feel Danny O'Neill's qualities to be fortuitous and irrelevant, having relation to nothing, clearly able to lead to nothing. No major issue is possible in this setting, nor any truth against which the action may be placed and judged. Even pity is unavailable to the reader for pity, without values, is as sentimental as if applied to insects.

The emotion aroused, of course, is horror. The aesthetic effect relies on the stretch between the sub-human life described and the reader's ideas about the nature of man—that is, on the reader possessing values the author refuses to recognize in his work. This denial of issues on which a book's meaning depends is the basis on which the American naturalist works. If, he seems to say, his society is unaware of values offering development, he cannot create them by force, out of a vacuum. He is asking us to recall the kind of humanity revealed, let us say, in *Macbeth,* or *King Lear,* and then to assume that it has disappeared: for Shakespeare, in his studies of human evil, premised the reality of good and evil, and man's struggle with them in a psychic arena of tremendous complexity. This assumption overweighs even the Marxist or Freudian philosophies on which so many naturalist writers prop their work, for Marxism intimates that man can conceive and strive for non-existent social values and Freud, drawing a picture of man as a moral creature, tormented by sin and remorse, nowhere implied that this essential nature might be appreciably altered or man able to exempt himself from a complex critique of behavior.

Although we sympathize with a novelist's necessity to reflect, even against his will, the mores of his society, we expect him to transcend them, at least to the extent of grasping the conclusions to which they lead. But the naturalist writer makes himself impervious to this examination in the same way that the society he depicts makes itself impervious to serious values. Like some bourgeois matron, he is unassailably virtuous and respectable, and may no longer be attacked for what he is, but only for what he is not—and this he rules out as against the laws of fair criticism. He lives on unearned profit, drawing on a judgment the tendency of his work refuses to face, but uses, and uses illegitimately. He can make no profound criticism himself, for his assumptions, though they may strenuously besiege hypocritical facades of bourgeois society, accept its concept of the nature of man. The leftist novelists of the thirties did not face their problem by having a character join a party, run for mayor on a

reform ticket, or love the masses. No detail of plot can substitute for a faculty of searching evaluation the author excludes from his medium, an evaluation that must be integral to the creative emotion itself, informing his perceptions and style as the moral preoccupation of Emily Dickinson and Hawthorne and Melville did theirs.

But it is in meeting these difficult problems that situations of real intensity are imagined, through which, as James said, the novel becomes "the most elastic, most prodigious of art forms." In rejecting them the novel has lost its form, and its purpose, become an accumulation of details, a sprawling shapelessness, essentially undifferentiated from journalism. For the last ten years or so, the average novelist has supposed firmly that his function is merely to observe and articulate. The more intelligent, like Dos Passos, have resorted frankly to a kind of personal journalism; and rightly so, since within the limits they accept there is nothing requiring aesthetic form for its elucidaton. War correspondents, on the other hand, being less subtle about these stringencies, persist in writing what they fancy to be novels. We have also a glut of supposed novels dealing with Topics and Problems, in which the correctness or fervor of the author's opinions is considered the aesthetic test. Personal journalism is the final development of the middle-class theory of the utilitarian value of art, one that brings the personality of the author, on which judgment is based, openly into the foreground.

The dilemma is this: the American novelist cannot write seriously without alienating himself from the values of his society, and at the same time he cannot function apart from his audience. The deadlock is not often enough realized even by good critics who, if the novelist long ago entrenched himself against their complaints, are equally culpable when they make him a victim of ideals he cannot apply. Serious criticism, like poetry, has effected for itself that total alienation: it swings from the body of common social perception by the most tenuous of threads. Able to survive, however starvingly, it expects the same thing from the novelist; but it is not in his power.

As far as the novelist is concerned, the best that can be said of most serious criticism is that it is less boring than the popular variety, and has helped to undermine the latter's position. The values of art, however their importance may be estimated in comparison with those of ethics, have been established to be of a different quality. What has not been made really clear is that there is *no* work of art the values of which are of any recognized application in the society within which the American novelist must work.

But where, then, can we place that undefined emotion on which even the naturalist depends for his effect? It is an anachronistic residue in our social ethic, and that the American novelist feels it to be such may be seen in the frequency with which he refers his material to the past. Our best novelists, in their best work, have been elegiac: like Henry James, they have turned to Europe; like Willa Cather, celebrated the pioneers; like Mark Twain, lamented a lost America; or, even more desperately, called upon the lives of half-primitive people, or their own memories of childhood, to give their material significance.

If, in recent years, our Southern writers have shown the most mature understanding of the novel form, it is because, as with Allen Tate, their preoccupation with history has given them a more immediately available past. But as that past is steadily reduced to mere gestures, they too resort, as Katherine Anne Porter so often does, to reminiscence of childhood, grandparents, Negro servants; or they employ the device of reference to the unassimilated and the outcast. In Robert Penn Warren's *At Heaven's Gate* the focus of evaluation is a backwoods religious fanatic whose hysterical moral sensibility runs through the book in implicit commentary on the cold modern viciousness of a main action in which no value is admissible. In *Cass Mastern's Wedding Ring,* a lately published section of his forthcoming novel, direct speech from the past is used in the form of an ancestral diary, a diary suffused with an anguish of guilt, read in a setting of the usual contemporary callousness.

Related techniques are used by Hemingway, who discovers profound values only in peasants, bull-fighters, fishermen, criminals and rebels against middle-class culture. Willa Cather, in the most perfectly stated of her contrasts between present and past, *The Professor's House,* glanced back to a vanished Indian tribe, with which her hero experiences a mystical communion.

The direct connection between a writer's grasp of the values he is invoking and his mastery of his medium may be seen in the scrupulousness and flexibility of style such writers have achieved when compared with the heavy iron tread or Norris, Dreiser, and their present-day counterparts. But our social reporters are not immune to the tug of the past. They have only failed to comprehend the reason for it. The very writers who, one imagines, would most deprecate James' insistence on the European theme, have succumbed to the stress that made it necessary, in their expression of a search for some place where a deeper awareness might be experienced.

The dominant note in the novels of the first quarter of this century was the turning toward cities: a note struck over and over in so many books about sensitive youth lost in the vacant loneliness of small towns. It was a loneliness evoked most hauntingly by Sherwood Anderson. But the inhabitants of a hundred Winesburgs strove towards a last page on which a train was boarded exultantly: that last page might always have had for its climax the triumphant "Chicago, Chicago," with which Floyd Dell ended his *Moon Calf.* The city stood for Civilization, in which life might be found to have new meaning. In the long run, it stood for Europe—for the American city, once reached, offered only impassive denial of all that longing. There is a kind of consummate statement of this theme in the work of Henry Miller, in which Europe seems to have become a main character, an immense, tragic personality, struggling in the embrace of a monstrously gravid America.

This seeking of value in another place or time has its own perils, the morbid texture of which may be felt if one imagines any European literature dwelling in a similar manner on its past, or the life of other nations. Again we think of the metaphor of an occupied country. Such a literature would be parasitic. And writing of this sort, though extremely effective in specific cases, does, with

repetition, take on an enervating regressive quality. The situations presented are as truly, if more subtly, false as those of the naturalists; beliefs are not rudely starved, but they are attenuated.

It would be absurd to claim that every good American novel might be classified as asserting ghostly values of the past, or a no-value that is really an affirmation of middle-class concepts. But those which resist such grouping suggest a floundering attempt to find, between two constricting solutions, a source of living emotion. Many experimenters adopt the image-making function of poetry as a major interest and the situational emotion of fiction is scattered in personal impression. The result is a warm confused mass of undisciplined sensation, with intensity of feeling mistaken for profundity, such as that in which Thomas Wolfe dissipated his talent. There are also cold, contrived effects, like those of Faulkner, where excitement and violence are substituted for meaning and relation; a kind of rape of poetic emotion occurs, and a drama is created that is purely fraudulent. As in a neurosis, where emotion finds no outlet in reality, the response to situation, which is the "reality" of the novel, is weakened.

It is, indeed, not poverty of emotion but counterfeit emotion that impresses us as most common in our minor writers. But the close relation between them is observable in the pages of *The New Yorker,* where sparsely doled-out sentiment is mingled with dead-pan reportage and posturing whimsy. Work like John O'Hara's, a refinement of reportage that combines snobbery, niggling finesses of style and gracefully calculated climaxes of emptiness, has an inevitable counterpart in the self-exploitation of Saroyan and his imitators. Such exhibitionism results when there is no source of values but the self.

A more sinister development is cuteness, an ersatz reaction to life invented to cover up a dead absence of real emotion. The greater the underlying petrification, the more it flourishes, a vulgar weed growing on an implacable slag-heap of non-feeling. Attempts at serious writing now seem to be buried with hideous immediacy under this growth: explorers of childhood are infested by grown men who lisp in baby-talk; lamenters for the past have their truths devoured by historical romancers; believers in the people are preyed upon by "pseudo folk-art." One feels that the moment has arrived for an allied vulgarization of the European theme, for a plague of imitations of Henry James and Edith Wharton—although the latter was so successful in vulgarizing her own fine accomplishment that the work might appear to have been done for all time.

But what, exactly, is meant by the European theme? As James stated it, it was the problem of the unawareness of Americans who, never having known profound moral conflict, were able to perceive, in a fullness of experience encountered in Europe, only evil; and having acquired no immunity, being overwhelmed by it. Even where, as in *The Wings of the Dove,* innocence is, in a measure, triumphant, it is still only in the European perspective that innocence may be defined, good and evil approached as aesthetic material, and the artist thus free to use his highest capacity by working on his most lofty theme.

How may we expect this situation to be vulgarized? Would it not be by

giving the greatest value to the American perspective? I think we can see what the novelist addressing the contemporary audience is appallingly likely to do with this theme in Glenway Wescott's *Apartment In Athens.* There is an element of injustice in thus citing Mr. Wescott, who is sincere in his artistic purposes, and has a real feeling for style and form. If his book is vulgar, it is not so by intent, but with the helpless doomed vulgarity that accompanies so many American literary efforts to cope with circumstances of moral ambiguity. *Apartment in Athens* is not interesting in itself, but only in the light of the author's entire work, a work that in its meagre but progressive exploration of every major American theme is a kind of asthetic pilgrimage, resembling nothing so much as a story Henry James might have written.

For Wescott as a writer carries a heavy burden of moral feeling which he seems forever trying, somewhat gingerly, to unload. Reading his early novel, *The Apple of the Eye,* one is struck by the incongruity of the material with the import he has attempted to give it. It is one of those dreary middle-western novels so epidemic in the twenties, the characters of which appear to have no relation to any known civilization. Over their dismal sub-humanity is spread a fruity elaboration of style wholly irrelevant to the context. Each section is prefaced with a thunderous Biblical quotation and there is an attempt to impart a solemn Biblical grandeur to the main character by surrounding her cloddish figure with portentous symbolic mutterings. The novel ends with the usual sensitive youth taking the usual train; the final impression is of a vague creative emotion looking vainly for a book.

Wescott then, with *The Grandmothers,* laid his own wreath on the altar of the American past, went to Europe, and produced nothing of importance until *The Pilgrim Hawk,* the short book on which his reputation may gratefully rest. For, based on the James theme of the American bystander confronted by a density of European experience, a wondering observer of layer on layer of ambiguity, in which nothing seems to happen and yet everything happens, *The Pilgrim Hawk* is one of the most intelligently conceived and realized novels written by a contemporary American.

But in *Apartment in Athens,* Wescott's determination to deal, not as a bystander, but directly, with moral problems has just the consequence the defenders of the naturalist school might bitterly have predicted. One feels at once here is what popular criticism means by a "moral" book, what it really wants: a book churning with indignation about things that cannot disturb our complacency a jot, a book of moral ardor that never questions an element of our culture; and yet is American in its perceptions, through and through. That is why the book has the peculiar unreality on which even enthusiastic reviewers were forced to comment. Wescott's story of a brutal German captain quartered on a Greek family, though not a single character in it is labeled American, is nevertheless peopled entirely by naive Americans in European clothing. The enslaved Greek husband and wife are mild American liberals, incredulously agape before a vicious passion of belief they cannot comprehend, referring for their purpose in life only to the Acropolis—the past. The German officer, in

his obtuseness to the possibility of self-criticism, his guilty sentimentality, his low level of consciousness, is the same old Philistine, this time on a vengeful rampage, against which modern artists have waged perpetual battle. *Apartment in Athens* has nothing to do with the real Europe, it only sounds our old chord: a timid negative striving for values against a positive bourgeois nihilism.

One does not object to a book because it has a "message," or even because one regards its message—in this case, that the Germans are an unmitigatedly evil race—as crude. Art is frequently cluttered with opinions—many notoriously inept, most corresponding to the prejudices of their time, some personally spiteful. For one reason or another the convictions may continue to be of interest, and yet the only reason they concern us is that the artist brought a particular awareness to their exposition. If we care at all what Dostoievsky thought about revolutionaries it is because he had unique penetration into the double nature of man. If we are going to be interested in what a writer thinks is good or evil he must have some rare insight into the nature of good and evil. If he has that, it doesn't matter if we consider his opinions foolish.

That is why Lawrence said, "Never trust the artist; trust the story." Critics exist because artists often don't know what their story is about. The artist need not think clearly—that is a critic's business. But he must feel with a special kind of depth. And that feeling is closely related to the emotional powers of his audience. The theme Mr. Wescott has approached in all his books is something about the human soul. But unless he treats it, as in *The Pilgrim Hawk,* as a bystander, he creates a newspaper world. He commits the fatal mistake of trying to form an aesthetic pattern by making life itself appear less equivocal; and his newspaper-minded audience is irremediably with him, understanding every word.

But at the same time that this ultra-clarified Americanism of Wescott's makes his book a failure, there are scenes in which his abilities are operating with great concentration. This is when the doctrinaire aspects of the book are forgotten, and the situation narrowed down, *abstracted,* into a sort of diapason of good and evil, in all their polarized unity. In these scenes there is the calm and tension that is the property of all serious art; Wescott's questing moral passion becomes pure, intellectualized, and his style takes on a cool rhythm that reminds us of an American accent of a different kind: the accent of our classics. In such passages Wescott recaptures a profoundly native voice, but only as his novel ceases to be a novel, and turns into a philosophic dialogue, a poetic discourse.

It seems unlikely that, without using the device of bystander to the same monotony as many novelists have used reference to the past, the international theme may solve our dilemma. A remaining possibility is to succeed wholly where Wescott succeeds in part. The novelist increasingly imitates the poet and the discursive thinker. A novel of formal beauty may thus be created, at the same time that it weakens the form as such. For the novel should not be so abstracted. Its strength is social and psychological as well as aesthetic, and it has a function in these realms for which no other writing in our time can

substitute: it is a mirror of social relations. Discourse can never invent powerful symbols for those relations as effectively as the novel, nor can poetry handle them directly. The novel, while asserting the most exacting demands of the human spirit, makes lucid the dark inner realities of our alienation, and the conflict among egos that is our most menacing social problem.

The failure of the novel, that is, would indicate an accelerated social neurosis. If problems cannot be solved aesthetically, they are, as Kierkegaard pointed out, unlikely to be solved ethically. But if true morality, as James thought, depends on a response to aesthetic urgencies demanding a solution, an effort to solve the novelist's difficulty will involve new insight into the qualities lacking in our society. They are qualities that have always existed in the severe yet intimate world of art: concrete, specific truths, in which words are controlled by thought, and fundamental reality rather than appearance is the goal—in contrast to the deceptive use of words, the manipulation of half-truths, and the distortions inherent in the statistic and the formula.

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A CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

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HYMAN SCHWETZOV:

Portrait One

They were moving once again
beneath the sky whispering
between red lianas, touching
their lips to the feet of old white
statues to make them wear
slowly away.

They rose in a glory, a cloud
that touched its perfume
to the cup and awaited eager, wide lips
heavy and apart for the dumb
dead kiss.

Movement distracts them
and they settle little marvels ·
minerals on a dead stone
and avert their odor and their sighs
to a hidden place

So nothing attracts the passerby
innocent, tied, crossed and retied
a nightingale song forced from
the throat, biting the lips—

They rise again for the caress
the brutal bite that brings
nothing to no parasite, allays
the body, sets fire to thought
and sweetly crucifies the face.

JOHN NERBER:

Birnam Wood

The compass spinning on the savage heath
Truly deflects; an iron field
Would less conjure the needle of its dart,
Misgiving, than his magnetics flirt
To give the range so long and well concealed;
Mechanized, his aging innocence must prove
Like Machiavelli the human north
By penalties imposed dislodging love:

His profit led, taught him to improvise
At night his secret ministries
Whose kingdom twice rewarded with his frown,
Keys to the golden texture of the crown;
His prophecy with milk had drenched the trees
Of Birnam, unfixed their hairy roots,
Dazing with camouflage his daring eyes,
To crush his public and exorbitant debts:

The true unruly Nemesis was wife,
Whose easy bedtime manners played
His gull for conquest, and won
Not victory but the monster of his man;
Flinching she deserted, and was laid
His partisan sleep-walker, the ghost
Haunting the guilty hallways of his grief,
Until she too must give him up for lost:

The stature of his effigy would pass
A tiny figure on a toy stage
Dimly perceived in history's candle flame;
Hateful but necessary, a name
For all the natural cruelties of his age;
The compass undeterred must point, convince,
Offering his image in the gorgon glass.
Intrigue and Death had found their total prince.

WILLIAM TROY:

Scott Fitzgerald—the Authority of Failure

Of course, in any absolute sense, Scott Fitzgerald was not a failure at all; he has left one short novel, passages in several others, and a handful of short stories which stand as much chance of survival as anything of their kind produced in this country during the same period. If the tag is so often attached to his name, it has been largely his own fault. It is true that he was the victim, among a great number of other influences in American life, of that paralyzing high-pressure by which the conscientious American writer is hastened to premature extinction as artist or as man. Upon the appearance of *The Crack-Up*,* a selection by Edmund Wilson of Fitzgerald's letters, notebooks and fugitive pieces, it was notable that all the emptiest and most venal elements in New York journalism united to crow amiably about his literary corpse to this same tune of insufficient production. Actually their reproaches betrayed more of their own failure to estimate what was good and enduring in his writing than his acknowledgeable limitations as an artist. If Fitzgerald had turned out as much as X or Y or Z, he would have been a different kind of writer—undoubtedly more admirable from the standpoint of the quasi-moral American *ethos* of production at any cost, but possibly less worth talking about five years after his death. And it might be said that Fitzgerald never hovered so close to real failure as when he listened from time to time, with too willing an ear, to these same reproaches.

But Fitzgerald brought most of it on himself by daring to make failure the consistent theme of his work from first to last. (Similarly Virginia Woolf used to be accused by the reviewers of being a sterile writer because she made sterility her principal theme.) It is perhaps only adumbrated in *This Side of Paradise;* for the discovery of its hero Amory Blaine that the world is not altogether his oyster is hardly the stuff of high tragedy. The book is interesting today as a document of the early 'Twenties; nobody who would know what it was like to be young and privileged and self-centered in that bizarre epoch can afford to neglect it. But it can also be read as a preliminary study in the kind of tortured narcissism that was to plague its author to the end of his days. (See the article called "Early Success" in the Wilson collection.) *The Beautiful and the Damned* is a more frayed and pretentious museum-piece, and the muddiest in conception of all the longer books. It is not so much a study in failure as in the *atmosphere* of failure—that is to say, of a world in which no moral decisions can be made because there are no values in terms of which they may be measured. Hardly is it a world suited to the purposes of the novelist, and the characters float around in it as in some aquamarine region comfortably shot through with the soft colors of self-pity and romantic irony. Not until *The Great Gatsby* did Fitzgerald hit upon something like Mr. Eliot's

* *The Crack-Up* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Edited by Edmund Wilson. New Directions.

"objective correlative" for the intermingled feeling of personal insufficiency and disillusionment with the world out of which he had unsuccessfully tried to write a novel.

Here is a remarkable instance of the manner in which adoption of a special form or technique can profoundly modify and define a writer's whole attitude toward his world. In the earlier books author and hero tended to melt into one because there was no internal principle of differentiation by which they might be separated; they respired in the same climate, emotional and moral; they were tarred with the same brush. But in *Gatsby* is achieved a dissociation, by which Fitzgerald was able to isolate one part of himself, the spectatorial or aesthetic, and also the more intelligent and responsible, in the person of the ordinary but quite sensible narrator, from another part of himself, the dream-ridden romantic adolescent from St. Paul and Princeton, in the person of the legendary Jay Gatsby. It is this which makes the latter one of the few truly mythological creations in our recent literature—for what is mythology but this same process of projected wish-fulfillment carried out on a larger scale and by the whole consciousness of a race? Indeed, before we are quite through with him, Gatsby becomes much more than a mere exorcizing of whatever false elements of the American dream Fitzgerald felt within himself: he becomes a symbol of America itself, dedicated to "the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty."

Not mythology, however, but a technical device which had been brought to high development by James and Conrad before him, made this dissociation possible for Fitzgerald. The device of the intelligent but sympathetic observer situated at the center of the tale, as James never ceases to demonstrate in the Prefaces, makes for some of the most priceless values in fiction—economy, suspense, intensity. And these values *The Great Gatsby* possesses to a rare degree. But the same device imposes on the novelist the necessity of tracing through in the observer or narrator himself some sort of growth in general moral perception, which will constitute in effect *his* story. Here, for example, insofar as the book is Gatsby's story it is a story of failure—the prolongation of the adolescent incapacity to distinguish between dream and reality, between the terms demanded of life and the terms offered. But insofar as it is the narrator's story it is a successful transcendence of a particularly bitter and harrowing set of experiences, localized in the sinister, distorted, El Greco-like Long Island atmosphere of the later 'Twenties, into a world of restored sanity and calm, symbolized by the bracing winter nights of the Middle Western prairies. "Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes," he writes, "but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart ever recurring." By reason of its enforced perspective the book takes on the pattern and the meaning of a Grail-romance—or of the initiation ritual on which it is based. Perhaps this will seem a far-fetched suggestion to make about a work so obviously modern in every respect; and it is unlikely that Fitzgerald had any such model in mind. But like *Billy*

Budd, The Red Badge of Courage, or *A Lost Lady*—to mention only a few American stories of similar length with which it may be compared—it is a record of the strenuous passage from deluded youth to maturity.

Never again was Fitzgerald to repeat the performance. *Tender is the Night* promises much in the way of scope but it soon turns out to be a backsliding into the old ambiguities. Love and money, fame and youth, youth and money—however one shuffles the antitheses they have a habit of melting into each other like the blue Mediteranean sky and sea of the opening background. To Dick Diver, with a mere change of pronoun, may be applied Flaubert's analysis of Emma Bovary: *"Elle confondait, dans son désir, les sensualités du luxe avec les joies du coeur, l'élégance des habitudes et les délicatesses du sentiment."* And it is this Bovaryism on the part of the hero, who as a psychiatrist should conceivably know more about himself, which in rendering his character so suspect prevents his meticulously graded deterioration from assuming any real significance. Moreover, there is an ambiguous treatment of the problem of guilt. We are never certain whether Diver's predicament is the result of his own weak judgment or of the behavior of his neurotic wife. At the end we are strangely unmoved by his down-fall because it has been less a tragedy of will than of circumstance.

Of *The Last Tycoon* we have only the unrevised hundred and thirty-three pages, supported by a loose collection of notes and synopses. In an unguarded admission Fitzgerald describes the book as "an escape into a lavish, romantic past that perhaps will not come again into our time." Its hero, suggested by a well-known Hollywood prodigy of a few years ago, is another one of those poor boys betrayed by "a heightened sensitivity to the promises of life." When we first meet him he is already a sick and disillusioned man, clutching for survival at what is advertised in the notes as "an immediate, dynamic, unusual, physical love affair." This is nothing less than "the meat of the book." But as much of it as is rendered includes some of the most unfortunate writing which Fitzgerald has left; he had never been at his best in the approach to the physical. Nor is it clear in what way the affair is related to the other last febrile gesture of Stahr—his championship of the Hollywood underdog in a struggle with the racketeers and big producers. Fortuitously the sense of social guilt of the mid-Thirties creeps into the fugue, although in truth this had been a strong undertone in early short-stories like "May Day" and "The Rich Boy." It is evident that Stahr is supposed to be some kind of symbol—but of what it would be hard to determine. From the synopses he is more like a receptacle for all the more familiar contradictions of his author's own sensibility—his arrogance and generosity, his fondness for money and his need for integrity, his attraction toward the fabulous in American life and his repulsion by its waste and terror. "Stahr is miserable and embittered toward the end," Fitzgerald writes, in one of his own last notes for the book. "Before death, thoughts from *Crack-Up.*" Apparently it was all to end in a flare-up of sensational and not too meaningful irony: Stahr, on his way to New York to call off a murder which he had ordered for the best of motives, is himself killed in an airplane crash, and his possessions

are rifled by a group of schoolchildren on a mountain. If there is anything symbolic in this situation, could it be the image of the modern Icarus soaring to disaster in that "universe of ineffable gaudiness" which was Fitzgerald's vision of the America of his time?

Inquiry into what was the real basis of Fitzgerald's long preoccupation with failure will not be helped too much by the autobiographical sketches in *The Crack-Up*. The reasons there offered are at once too simple and too complicated. No psychologist is likely to take very seriously the two early frustrations described—inability to make a Princeton football team and to go overseas in the last war. In the etiology of the Fitzgerald case, as the psychologists would say, the roots run much deeper, and nobody cares to disturb them at this early date. His unconscionable good looks were indeed a public phenomenon, and their effect on his total personality was something which he himself would not decline to admit. The *imago* of the physical self had a way of eclipsing at times the more important *imago* of the artist. But even this is a delicate enough matter. Besides, there were at work elements of a quite different order—racial and religious. For some reason he could never accept the large and positive influence of his Celtic inheritance, especially in his feeling for language, and his hearkening back to the South has a little too nostalgic a ring to be convincing. Closely related to this was the never resolved attitude toward money and social position in relation to individual worth. But least explored of all by his critics were the permanent effects of his early exposure to Catholicism, which are no less potent because rarely on the surface of his work. (The great exception is "Absolution," perhaps the finest of the short stories.) Indeed, it may have been the old habit of the confession which drove him, pathetically, at the end, to the public *examen de conscience* in the garish pages of *Esquire* magazine.

To add to his sense of failure there was also his awareness of distinct intellectual limitations, which he shared with the majority of American novelists of his time. "I had done very little thinking," he admits, "save within the problems of my craft." Whatever he received at Princeton was scarcely to be called an education; in later years he read little, shrank from abstract ideas, and was hardly conscious of the historical events that were shaping up around him. Perhaps it is not well for the novelist to encumber himself with too much knowledge, although one cannot help recalling the vast cultural apparatus of a Tolstoi or a Joyce, or the dialectical intrepidity of a Dostoievski or a Mann. And recalling these Europeans, none of whom foundered on the way, one wonders whether a certain coyness toward the things of the mind is not one reason for the lack of development in most American writers. Art is not intellect alone; but without intellect art is not likely to emerge beyond the plane of perpetual immaturity.

Lastly, there was Fitzgerald's exasperation with the *multiplicity* of modern human existence—especially in his own country. "It's under you, over you, and all around you," he protested, in the hearing of the present writer, to a young woman who had connived at the slow progress of his work. "And the problem

is to get hold of it somehow." It was exasperating because for the writer, whose business is to extract the unique quality of his time, what Baudelaire calls the quality of *modernité,* there was too much to be sensed, to be discarded, to be reconciled into some kind of order. Yet for the writer this was the first of obligations, without it he was nothing—"Our passion is our task, and our task is our passion." What was the common problem of the American novelist was intensified for him by his unusually high sense of vocation.

In the last analysis, if Fitzgerald failed, it was because the only standard which he could recognize, like the Platonic conception of himself forged by young Jay Gatsby in the shabby bedroom in North Dakota, was too much for him to realize. His failure was the defect of his virtues. And this is perhaps the greatest meaning of his career to the younger generation of writers.

"I talk with the authority of failure," he writes in the notebooks, "Ernest with the authority of success. We could never sit across the same table again." It is a great phrase. And the statement as a whole is one neither of abject self-abasement nor of false humility. What Fitzgerald implies is that the stakes for which he played were of a kind more difficult and more unattainable than "Ernest" or any of his contemporaries could even have imagined. And his only strength is in the consciousness of this fact.

R. P. BLACKMUR:

The Sphinx and the Housecat

WILLIAM ELLERY SEDGWICK: *Herman Melville. The Tragedy of Mind.* Harvard University Press.

Selected Poems of Herman Melville. Edited by F. O. Matthiessen. New Directions.

F. O. MATTHIESSEN: *Henry James: The Major Phase.* Oxford University Press.

HENRY JAMES: *Stories of Writers and Artists.* Edited with an Introduction by F. O. Matthiessen. New Directions.

The Great Short Novels of Henry James. Edited with an Introduction and Comments by Philip Rahv. Dial Press.

Without wishing to disturb in any way either the intentions or the accomplishments of the books named above, I should like all the same to suggest my own purpose in considering them together by making some provisional changes in the names of each. These changes would not stand by themselves but need the given titles for reference—for the measure of parallel distance. What is the distance, then, between the tragedy of mind and the *impasse* of mind?—between poems and *verse?*—between the major phase and the major pursuit?—between stories and *rôles* of writers and artists?—between great short novels and *intermittences?* Just the unbridgeable distance between two forms of identity, like that, in each case, between a cry and a gasp. "What are all those fish lie gasping on the strand?"

These parallels of course make frames of judgment: that Melville, after *Moby Dick,* struggled chiefly in his mind, in an impasse of mind, and never worked it out in any form involving so much acceptance as tragedy, and that this is illustrated amply enough in his verse where the stricture of form was never able to secure from him for its own purposes either the force of intellect or of sensibility. Thus we read the verse either as exercises to pass the mind's time or as clues to the impasse: that is, as data of Melville's defects. With James it is a little different; James did get out of his mind, at last, what he wanted and was able triumphantly to pursue it, to commit himself to it unreservedly at about the turn of the century. But he had had his gaps of gasping, when he didn't know and had to make substitutions, had to *ad lib,* and had, so to speak, to take himself too seriously: when he deployed the artist in the rôle of victim *and* outcast from society, or when, alternatively, he had to see the sensitive man or woman, the artist *manqué,* as unable to get out of the social role anything but the ironic success of personal defeat, so that life—the true life of the "sacred rage"—had for the most part to be envisaged in its own intermittences, truncations, and flat absence. Sedgwick makes an excellent case for the tragedy of mind in the Melville of *Moby Dick,* and Matthiessen makes excellent and persuasive citations of James' assenting vision of tragedy in the three novels which were the major phase of full declaration of what had been accepted only as fable in James' uncommitted years, the years between *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove.* But the texts here presented by Rahv and Matthiessen do nothing of the sort.

They show rather both the particular abjectness of Melville and James faced with their own society except at their peaks of commitment, and the general prospect of similar abjectness for any artist who by nature finds himself,—not so much transplanted, exiled, or ignored—as deliberately self-pruned at the roots rather than at the branch: the prospect of wilt, self-pity, and flagging histrionics; things which are indeed part of the modern story, the story of rejection, denial, and passionate preening agony thereafter. The interesting thing is that something of this abject posture is taken by most distinguished American authors in some part of their lives and in a great part of their works: Poe, Whitman, Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, and Mark Twain, as well as Melville and James; and the interesting question is whether the inadequacy lay radically in American society or accidentally in the writers themselves. Why did American society as a going concern never occupy any of these writers for long if at all? Why did none of them, except Whitman by excess, exhibit sex as the force it universally is and must needs was even in American society? Why in both respects were their European and Russian contemporaries in opposite case? The questions ask themselves in such a way as to suggest a primacy of accident in the answer; but how in that case shall we explain the vast and increasing popularity today among writers and those sensitive to writing of the rôle James wrote for the defeated artist or gentleman or lover? Put so, the question begins to scream like Megalopolis blinded.

But I don't think Megalopolis is the answer, only the condition of the answer, and the condition indeed which shows that if the choice of the abject role is a rational choice it is suicidal just the same. Reason which compels suicide must be, however right at the act, somehow based on poorly selected argument along the way. Somewhere, that is, the artist made out the society with which he struggled as monstrous and intolerable where more likely he should have seen the unfamiliar and alien making seemingly insoluble problems; and therefore himself reacted in monstrous excess of fineness refined and roses lilied. What else could he do—what else can he do—when he is so clearly on his own? Monsters seen by humans themselves become human in time; that is, they come to symbolize generally the human quality which distinguished them in the first place; so that you find it argued there were no monsters in Greek art since each of us has digested Medusa and Helen of Troy. But our days are dragon-ridden and the Henry James artist is only, perhaps, a dragon-form of man asserting his individual dignity in the face of a society which, requiring it as much as ever, makes in its present stage of shifting amorphous masses and vast pleas for the anonymous and the common, no acknowledgement of room for it. This

is much to rest on little, but there is the little in James which suggests that as he got away from the vision of the abject role and got merely to revising his representation of it he saw a better justification for the playing of the role. As an example I offer from "The Author of *Beltraffio*" the characterization of Mark Ambient's genius as having "brilliancy" in the vision of 1884 and as having "dignity" in the revision of twenty-odd years later: the major phase had supervened by that much, and the reader who cares to do so will find many more instances if he collates the version printed by Rahv with the revision printed by Matthiessen. All I should like to suggest is that in the general contemporary addiction to the abject artist, similar little, but critical, revisions be made or the role will be played in an excess of vanity as well as feeling.

For in James' tales—and perhaps in Melville's silence as well as in *Pierre* and *Billy Budd*—the excess, the monster, was everywhere of feeling, not vanity, and the feeling of actual or impending situations. And here again we come on a feature common to our whole list of distinguished American writers through the end of the last century: the relative absence of over-arching intellect and the virtual absence of sustained dramatic or narrative power, and these in the face of felt conditions requiring both for full representation. The point is that the absence of intellect prevented the fullness of feeling from getting into the writing, for intellect, in the arts, furnishes capable forms for which no perfection of mere superficial or "technical" forms can substitute. I would suggest that what we call the ambiguity in "The Turn of the Screw" or "The Figure in the Carpet" and what Melville himself called ambiguities in the subtitle of *Pierre* both arise from this negative cause. There is no such ambiguity in any work of James Joyce or Dostoevsky or Shakespeare—authors in whose works the question might rise. Applied to James, this is the tail-side of Eliot's coined praise in his remark to the effect that James had a mind so fine that no mere idea could violate it. The defense kept out more than violations, and in Melville as well as James; for which there is ample evidence in the difficulties and weaknesses cited by Sedgwick and Matthiessen, but better evidence still in what, as it seems to me, takes the place of fully operant intellect in the compositional forms to which both writers were addicted: I mean the allegory in *Moby Dick* and *Mardi,* the sermons in *Moby Dick* and *Pierre,* and the Gothic froth that overfurnishes the thunder with merely human melodrama in the latter book; and in James I mean the fables and ghost-stories and frantic fantasies. (*E. g.,* in this order: "The Great Good Place," "The Friends of the Friends," and "The Figure in the Carpet"—in each of which a full intention was belittled and defaced by forms inadequate to order the inner stresses.) None of these superficial forms could use the full force of Melville's or James' mind, but since the force was there, and great, did not so much ease or reduce it as centrifugally dissipate it—as the *fable* of evil dissipates and popularizes *Richard III,* and as its *dramatization* in Iago concentrates *Othello* quite beyond its popular disfigurements.

Here, in the notion of evil, is a good nexus to bring us to conclusion. Matthiessen quotes in his preface to his selection of Melville's poems these lines:

> No utter surprise can come to him
> Who reaches Shakespeare's core;
> That which we seek and shun is there—
> Man's final lore

and says, rightly, that they suggest Melville's master preoccupation. In his book on James, Matthiessen rather less specifically but very persuasively suggests in terms of the hallucination of the presence of evil a similar preoccupation in James. Again, I think he is right. To seek what we must shun is a very great task, and only very great men have been able to maintain the self-imposition in the task. Ghost stories, fairy stories, allegories, idylls, fables and religious rituals have provided the usual protection of psychic distance in our representations of the evil in which we have and maul our being; and indeed a direct representation of evil—as of good—often seems humiliatingly shoddy. Ordinarily, then, there should be no complaint against the writers who fall into the lesser, and less shoddy forms. But

Melville wrote *Moby Dick* and "Benito Cereno," James wrote *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Sacred Fount* and "The Bench of Desolation," and in these works made the major try which fills us unexceptionably with the obligation to understand and query and choose in their work and lives. It is only the lesser writers who can be taken as they come and go. It is the sphinx gives meaning to the housecat.

HENRY MILLER:

The Novels of Albert Cossery

Albert Cossery is a young Egyptian, born in Cairo, who spent a number of years in Paris and writes his books in French. He is rapidly gaining recognition not only in the French-speaking world but in England and soon, we expect, in America, where his first book *(The Men God Forgot)* is now being published in English*. He has just finished a third book, a long novel, called *Les Fainéants dans la Vallée Fertile,* which will be published the end of this year. All his books have been translated into Arabic and are creating a stir in the Near and Middle East. They are destined, in my opinion, to be translated into many tongues, for their appeal is universal. He writes exclusively about the unalleviated misery of the masses, about the little men, the forgotten men, men, women and children, I should say, forgotten of God. No living writer that I know of describes more poignantly and implacably the lives of the vast submerged multitude of mankind. He touches depths of despair, degradation and resignation which neither Gorki nor Dostoievski has registered. He is dealing, of course, with his own people whose misery began before the Western civilization was dreamed of. Despite the seemingly unrelieved gloom and futility in which his figures move, the author nevertheless expresses in every work his indomitable faith in the power of the people to throw off the yoke. Usually this hope is voiced by one of the characters apparently without hope. It is not a shout which is given forth but a quiet, determined affirmation—like the sudden appearance of a bud in the darkest hour of the night.

In *The Men God Forgot* we have five rather short vignettes which give a foretaste of Cossery's bite and fervor. To me the book was a complete surprise, the first of its kind that I have seen since the work of the great Russian writers of the past. It is the sort of book that precedes revolutions, and begets revolution, if the tongue of man possesses any power whatever. Cossery here gives tongues to the speechless ones. Naturally, they do not speak like the professional agitators indoctrinated with Marxism. Their language is childlike, simple to the point of foolishness, but pregnant with a meaning which, when understood by those in power, will cause them to tremble and shudder. Often they express themselves in fantasy, a dream language which, in their case, demands no psychoanalytical interpretation. It is as clear as the handwriting on the wall. In effect, this is precisely what Cossery is doing—writing his message on the wall! Only, he is not speaking for himself but for the multitude. He does not revel in the horrors of misery, as might be imagined from a cursory glance, he is heralding the coming of a new dawn, a mighty dawn from the near, the middle and the far East.

His books are saturated with a mordant, savage humor which makes one laugh and weep at the same time. There is no separation between the author and the pitiable figures he depicts. He is not only for them, he is of them too. In expressing their vagaries, one feels that Albert Cossery is also just learning to use his voice, to use it in a new way, a way that will never be forgotten. To a Westerner, especially an American, his types will probably seem outlandish and ridiculous, almost incredible. We have forgotten that men can sink so low; we know nothing of this abysmal level of existence, not even in our most backward regions. But I am assured by those who know that there is nothing the

* By Circle Editions, Berkeley, California.

least incredible, the least fantastic, about Cossery's creatures or their situation. He has given us a reality all too real, incredible only that in such an "enlightened" era such things can be.

*The House of Certain Death,** his second book, could well be taken as symbolic. We are all living in that house, whether we realize it or not. The huge crack in the wall is patent to every eye, except that of the landlord. The question is, whither shall we go and how? For the vast multitude seeking a bare means of subsistence every house is doomed. The solution, as one of the characters in the book sees it, is not to pay rent any longer. They have tried every means in their power to bring attention to their ominous plight, but unsuccessfully. They have even written a letter to the Government, about which there is a grave question—does the Government know how to read? This letter, incidentally, is a masterpiece. It was written for the tenants by Ahmed Safa, formerly a tramway motorman, now a vendor of stolen cats and a confirmed hashish smoker. In it Ahmed Safa expresses the pious hope that the Government will come to look at the house, in order to see for itself. If not, he adds, we will bring it to you, which amounts to the same. (!) There is one tenant, however, who seems not to care whether the house crumbles or not. That is Bayoumi, the man who keeps trained monkeys. "Why not live in the streets?" he tells one of the other tenants. "The streets are made for everybody. No one will ask you for rent then."

Abdel Al is of another mind. He is the one who has been urging the others to cease paying rent. It is he who finally inspires fear and dread in the heartless owner, Si Khalil. Towards the end of the book they meet one day in a park. Si Khalil pretends that they ought to understand one another, get together in some way. "You and I will never reach an understanding," replies Abdel Al. "We have nothing in common." Nevertheless Si Khalil persists. He is terrified of what may happen should all the witless tenants of all his crumbling houses think like Abdel Al.

Says Abdel Al: "What gives you fear is not me but the whole multitude of men hidden behind me, don't you see them?"

Si Khalil tries to tell him that sorrow has touched him. "On life's highways sorrows are without number."

"On life's highway," retorts Abdel Al, "one sometimes encounters vengeance."

Si Khalil registers skepticism and disdain. "There's no sense to your words," he keeps saying.

"You'll know differently one day," says Abdel Al.

"You'll be dead well before that," Si Khalil replies.

"The house will cave in on us all," says Abdel Al. "But we are numberless. It will not kill all of us. The people will live and they will know how to avenge themselves."

With this they take leave of one another. We wait now for the house to collapse.

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* *La Maison de la Mort Certaine.* Editions Masses, Cairo, Egypt, 1942.

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